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The Missing Components in Dutch Literacy Training

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The missing components in Dutch literacy training

How to support and improve literacy training

Marlou Zandgrond

Wetenschapswinkel Taal, Cultuur en Communicatie

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The missing components in Dutch literacy training:

how to support and improve literacy training

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Abstract

Illiteracy has recently resurfaced as being a big societal issue in the Netherlands that might be passed on from generations or that arises due to failures to gain a sufficient educational level. It consequently could lead to a lower income, higher health risks and shame. It therefore might be of vital importance to try to decrease the illiteracy rate in the Netherlands, to prevent people with low literacy skills to be excluded in our modern society. This study provides an inventory of recent, relevant studies, programs and materials that aim to decrease the Dutch illiteracy rate. This inventory illustrates that, although many factors are being accounted for (e.g. ways to improve illiteracy identification or communication), many other questions are still unanswered. Therefore, the second sub-study focuses on literacy training in Taalhuizen to get an insight look and to look for improvements based on instructors' experiences. This study's results indicate that these trainings provide for positive improvements in decreasing illiteracy. However, it still remains difficult to reach and identify the target group in which shame continues to be a major factor. In addition, the literacy training environment is not ideal. Separate rooms are not always available, which leads to a lack of privacy and a higher risk of distraction. Lastly, majority of the materials remain unused, due to the fact that they either do not align with participants' learning goal or with their literacy level. This study shows that we should continue to focus on improving such factors to maximize the impact of literacy training. It also suggests to break the taboo of illiteracy by focusing not only on things that the illiterate population cannot do and needs to improve, but also on things the literate population can improve to meet them in the middle.

Keywords: illiteracy, reaching illiterates, literacy training, Taalhuizen

Introduction

According to UNESCO, there are approximately 750 million illiterates in the world, of which more than 70 percent reside in third-world countries, most notably in the Southern Asia and Africa. In such countries, education is complex, due to (1) a lack of access to education, (2) a failure to retain children in school and keep them on track, and (3) a lack of quality and regulatory control in in-classroom activities (UNESCO, 2017). Because of these statistics, it is understandable that illiteracy is mainly associated with third-world countries and is easily overlooked closer to home. Unfortunately, illiteracy is also still an occurring phenomenon in Western, rich countries. This not only concerns immigrants or people with another mother tongue, but native speakers as well. A recent Dutch report, for instance, has shown that approximately 2.5 million people in the Netherlands struggle with literacy-related problems, numeral and/or digital skills (Algemene rekenkamer, 2016; Heggers, 2019). This means that with a population of nearly 17 million people (CBS, 2019), as much as 14 percent in the Netherlands are affected by these literacy-related problems.

Often, people feel ashamed for the fact that they are illiterate. Thus, other ways to participate in society are often found, without mentioning their lack of basic literacy skills. For instance, strategies such as: "I forgot my glasses at home, can you explain to me what is in this document?" (Heggers, 2019, p.12) may be used to get the required information. However, research also shows that such illiterate speakers who may disappear under the radar in everyday life, encounter problems in more vital situations. One study, for instance, described patients with poor reading skills making severe errors in medication doses (Kefalides, 1999). Moreover, past studies have attested strong associations between lower educational levels, which often coincides with low literacy, and poor health outcomes (Van der Heide, Wang, Droomers, Spreeuwenberg, Rademakers & Uiters, 2013).

These are some of the reasons why multiple stakeholders from health care, educational, linguistic or governmental perspective strive to decrease illiteracy. Therefore, several programs have been set up by the government and extensive research has been done and is being done with the aim of supporting illiterate people in their everyday life and to support an increase of literacy skills. However, this endeavour is not without difficulties. First of all, illiterate people are hard to identify, due to the fact that they may be ashamed of their illiteracy, and therefore often do not seek help themselves (Parikh, Parker, Nurss, Baker & Williams, 1996). Furthermore, overestimating people's literacy skills often happens, resulting in an inadequate recognition of illiteracy when it is present (Bass, Wilson, Griffith & Barnett, 2002). More so, when illiterate people have been identified and have agreed to be helped and to start learning, other external factors such as cognitive ability, motivation and shame may play a role in the effectiveness and the support of the language teaching (Reis & Castro-Caldas, 1997). This is related to the fact that it is currently unknown as yet what the best teaching method is to combat illiteracy in adulthood.

To look into some these problems more closely, this investigation consists of two parts, operationalized as two sub-studies. The main aim of the first sub-study is to make an inventory of existing studies and programs that have been set up with an eye on improving literacy in the Netherlands and of materials and instruments that are available for this cause. In addition, the second sub-study will then delve into the practice of literacy training in the Netherlands, to see how much of the available materials and expertise is actually used and to focus on teachers' experiences and problems they run into while providing the training. The second sub-study will do so in the context of the province of Groningen, where low literacy levels and high illiteracy rates have been detected (Bijlsma, Van den Brakel, Van der Velden & Allen, 2016).

The outline of this study will be as follows. It will first provide a general theoretical framework. The two sub-studies will follow after that. These sub-studies include their own short introduction, method, results, discussion and conclusion. Lastly, a general conclusion and discussion about the overall study will be provided.

Theoretical background

Defining illiteracy

In order to gain a better understanding of the concept of illiteracy, the multiple definitions of illiteracy need to be reviewed. Furthermore, in order to avoid inconsistent use of the term illiteracy, a concise, overall definition has to be formed that is employed in this study. Illiteracy in the Oxford English Dictionary, for instance, has been defined somewhat differently compared to the term being used in research. The description for illiteracy in the Oxford English Dictionary most likely is the generally known definition of illiteracy. It states that illiteracy is "the inability to read or write.". Additionally, one can be "ignorant in a particular subject or activity", "uncultured or poorly educated", and "showing a lack of education" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2019). In essence, this means that someone is illiterate when he or she cannot read or write. However, some additional characteristics are mentioned in parallel to this definition, such as being uncultured, lacking education and being ignorant in certain aspects. Although these characteristics apply to some illiterate people, it is not the general consensus or characteristic of illiteracy that emerges. At the other end of the spectrum, for instance, Horning (2007) discusses several studies targeting illiteracy among college students to show that, although students are generally perfectly capable of reading and writing properly, some may lack necessary skills to critically read and write, and consequently lack full participation in society, thus showing a lack of critical literacy. Thus, according to Horning (2007), being able to read or write does not necessarily make you literate. Horning

(2007) therefore offers a shift from the standard definition to illiteracy to a more socially justified definition. She opts for the new term 'critical literacy', denoted to mean:

"the psycholinguistic processes of getting meaning from or putting meaning into print and/or sound, images and movement, on a page or screen, used for the purposes of analysis, synthesis and evaluation; these processes develop through formal schooling and beyond it, at home and at work, in childhood and across the lifespan and are essential to human functioning in a democratic society." (Horning, 2007, p.81).

Such a shift towards viewing illiteracy as entrenched with the social dimension is in line with another term that has been coined to describe illiteracy: functional illiteracy, which appears to occupy a middle ground between the two extremes presented so far. In contrast to the original definition of illiteracy, functional illiterates are able to read and write to a certain extent, but are unable to use their literacy skills in practice (Vágvölgyi, Coldea, Dresler, Schrader & Nuerk, 2016). Analysis shows that functional illiterate people show deficits in several areas, related to language processing and cognition, and likewise in the realm of numerical abilities. Therefore, they argue for a sharpened definition of illiteracy, in which functional illiterates are defined as having had education for some time, without being able to require basic literacy skills, specifically reading, writing and calculation skills. The linguistic, cognitive and numerical deficits of functional illiterates may thus negatively affect their everyday life. To examine the extent of this, Vágvölgyi and colleagues (2016) strongly argue that these claims need to be researched to a greater extent in the future.

This latter definition of illiteracy is a near equivalent of the term that is mostly adopted in the Dutch literature. Although the original term and definition of illiteracy coincides with the Dutch word 'analfabetisme' (being unable to read and write), Dutch studies more often use

the term 'laaggeletterdheid' (literally translated as: low-literacy) to describe the concept.

'Laaggeletterdheid' is defined as having a lower or similar language level than the Dutch educational vmbo or mbo 2/3 level. In comparison, this would amount to approximately B1 level according to the CEFR framework (College voor Toetsen en Examens, 2019).

Furthermore, laaggeletterden may have additional difficulties with their numeracy skills and digital skills (Heggens, 2019).

In conclusion, although illiteracy was originally used as a term to define those unable to read or write, recent studies have posited that illiteracy is a more complex matter.

Furthermore, they argue for a change in definition and therefore, based on the available work so far, this study too adopts a more broader definition of the term:

"Illiterates are those adults who may have had education in which they acquired literacy skills at the level of, or lower than the level of the Dutch educational level of vmbo or mbo 2/3, resulting in an inability to effectively apply these skills in practice." In other words, although the term illiteracy is used for convenience, this is taken to encompass low-literacy.

As mentioned before, Vágvölgyi and colleagues (2016) mentioned several studies that associated illiteracy with language processing, numerical abilities, and cognition deficits.

However, these deficits most likely are not the only reasons for illiteracy to occur. There might be, for instance, other social or developmental reasons that could cause illiteracy. The next chapter will delve into such underlying causes.

Causes and effects of illiteracy

It is important to look into the different factors that contribute illiteracy, because this insight might help in devising appropriate and effective interventions. Therefore, extensive research has been done about factors that might possible causes illiteracy. Many hypotheses

can be made based on these studies, but unfortunately, this work has not resulted in conclusive evidence.

Castro-Caldas, Petersson, Reis, Stone-Elander and Ingvar (1998) examined the potential neural causes for illiteracy. Their study confirmed evidence for neural differences between literates and illiterates and the fact that learning literacy skills at a young age influences the function organization of the brain, which might in turn negatively affect literacy skills. From a more social perspective, Cooter (2006) defined illiteracy as a possible intergenerational problem, hence, a social-cultural phenomenon. In the case of intergenerational illiteracy, illiterate parents hinder the development of their children's literacy skills through, for instance, little child-parent interaction or a lack of quality (reading) materials, which consequently can lead to a greater risk of school or literacy failure. The majority of these cases happen in high-poverty urban and rural settings, including those in the Netherlands. Indeed, Clement and Groot (2017) also mentioned the pattern of illiteracy being passed on from generation to generation in Dutch settings and created an intervention method they labelled 'intergenerational learning' to break this pattern. With intergenerational learning, two or more generations will learn new skills by teaching each other or learning from each other. This way, both generations benefit from the learning experience. Such learning can also be literacy related.

Another, more obvious explanation for one's illiteracy is tied to education or lack thereof. The group of speakers who are illiterate in the Netherlands due to lack of schooling are, however, a heterogeneous group (Bohnen, Ceulemans, Van de Guchte, Kurvers & Van Tendeloo, 2004). First, they are made up of those who received education that did not reach the minimum level set by the government (e.g. College voor Toetsen en Examens, 2019; Heggers, 2019), which can be the case by both NT1 (Dutch as a first language) illiterates, and NT2 (Dutch as a second language) illiterates. This group mostly consists of older adults

because, nowadays, most people finish at least primary education, and often also more advanced forms of education.

Another group consists of those who may have finished school at secondary or sometimes even vocational tertiary level, but subsequently were not able to maintain that level or to get to the level due to other factors, such as learning or other intellectual disabilities (such as dyslexia). Furthermore, physical disabilities may have affected their learning process. Recent pressure from society for a certain (advanced) level of literacy might additionally affect one's learning process, due to a possible increase in fear of failure. This may make this group even more vulnerable.

It is important to point out that illiteracy in the Netherlands often does not have one underlying case, however. Most NT1 illiterates are a product of their social-economical, social-cultural, educational and personal situation (such as home-situation and poverty) where different factors might interact. NT2 illiterates, on the other hand, often already lacked an educational basis in their home country, or are those who got stuck in their illiteracy level (Bohnen et al., 2004; Willemse, Jurrius & Den Hollander, 2011).

These results show once again that there are several factors that might influence whether someone is illiterate or not. It is interesting to see that some of these intertwined factors might not only be indicators for illiteracy, but also costs that come with illiteracy. Intergenerational illiteracy might, for instance, be the cause for one generation to be illiterate, and might subsequently affect the next generation. Poverty has been mentioned as a cause of illiteracy by Willemse and colleagues (2011), but it has also often been associated with being an effect of illiteracy (e.g. Roman, 2004; Cree, Kay & Steward, 2012; Christoffels, Baay, Bijlsma & Levels, 2016). It is thus often hard to distinguish between a factor being a reason for illiteracy or an effect resulting from it and it is important to individually distinguish this to prevent a wrong diagnosis and with that an inadequate treatment.

However, some factors are clearly costs that could come with illiteracy rather than underlying causes. Such costs can be economical or social in nature. The most regularly mentioned effect of illiteracy is shame. Strong associations have been established between illiteracy and shame. At first sight, it may not be immediately obvious that shame, apart from being a personal burden, would be a great cost. However, shame of something, in this case illiteracy, often results in hiding that particular problem. Hiding the problem can result in additional difficulties, due to the fact that it is unknown to an outsider where this problem is coming from, which is from illiteracy (Parikh et al., 1996; Roman, 2004). This will be more closely discussed later on.

A higher risk for health problems is also often mentioned as one of the costs of illiteracy and shame could be an important contributing factor to this as well (Roman, 2004). For instance, as quoted by Cree, Kay and Steward (2012, p.5):

"Illiteracy significantly limits a person's ability to access, understand and apply health-related information and messages. This results in poor household and personal health, hygiene and nutrition."

Other factors that could be linked with illiteracy, according to Cree, Kay and Steward (2012) are crime, welfare, education and the role of family. This study by Cree and colleagues (2012) is a meta-analysis report from the World Literacy Foundation that examined illiteracy in a global context by comparing illiteracy in developed, developing and emerging countries. Although it seems at first glance as if the differences between illiteracy in these countries will vary greatly, the effects of illiteracy were found to be similar. Cree and colleagues (2012) found, for instance, that majority of the inmates around the world are illiterate. However, further research has to decide whether this generally is a cost of illiteracy or a reason for it.

Moreover, illiterates were more likely to be dependent on welfare or unemployment benefits (Cree et al., 2012) and to have a lower income than literates (Roman, 2004). Lastly, illiterate parents generally have lower educational expectations for their children or themselves. This can then have negative consequences for their children, such as behavioural problems, higher absent rates at school and more school drop outs. In general, parents offer less encouragement to their children in their learning process. This then can in turn cause intergenerational illiteracy, completing the circle (Cree et al, 2012; Christoffels et al., 2016). Lastly, illiteracy can come to the expense illiterates' own health, due to the fact that they may not be capable to read important informational materials (Twickler, Hoogstraaten, Reuwer, Singels, Stronks & Essink-Bot, 2009).

Several economical costs were additionally mentioned by Cree and colleagues (2012) as being a consequence of illiteracy. First was limited employability. Illiterates were found to have a lesser income of approximately 30% in comparison with their literate counterparts and a lower chance to grow their income over the years than literates. Furthermore, illiterates might be less financially skilled, leading to losing (wealth) opportunities. More so, lost business productivity could occur through practicalities such as poor communication and additional costs to fix errors. Poor literacy skills can also lead to a loss of productivity and profitability in business, due to more mistakes and poor communication (Roman, 2004). Lastly, a lack in literacy skills may often result in a lack in technological skills. Current society slowly requires more technological skills and therefore, it becomes more challenging for illiterates to effectively compete with literates (Cree et al., 2012).

Some of the attested consequences of illiteracy are thus substantial and have far-reaching consequences of their own. It is therefore important to note that these costs do not apply to everyone or to the same extent. Not all illiterate people, for instance, suffer from a certain amount of poverty. These factors are, however, important indicators for (the

possibility of) illiteracy in most countries, including the Netherlands. (Cree et al., 2012; Christoffels et al., 2016).

Strategies for avoiding illiteracy difficulties

As Parikh and colleagues (1996) and Roman (2004) indicated, illiterates can be ashamed of their status. This may result in avoiding certain activities to prevent others from finding out about their deficits and judging them. Many illiterates have found ways of avoiding basic activities on a daily basis, so that they are still able to function and participate in society (Heggers, 2019). This is accomplished by using other means and strategies in order to attain their goal in activities. Such activities can vary from everyday activities, such as doing groceries, to more prominent activities such as going to a doctor's appointment (Landelijke Huisartsen Vereniging, 2011; Heggers, 2019). Heggers (2019) obtained a list, based on interviews with several illiterates, of excuses that are used regularly. The following examples, thus, are taken from Heggers (2019, p.11) First of all, illiterates may come up with excuses on why they cannot do a certain thing. These excuses range from "Die hoofdpijn gaat maar niet over"; *that headache just won't go away*, to "Sorry, ik ben mijn bril vergeten, kunt u zeggen wat er staat?"; *I'm sorry, I forgot my glasses today. Could you maybe tell me the content of this document?*.

Secondly, illiterates barely read the newspaper or other documents. It is often too challenging to read those and to understand their content. As a solution, they mostly depend on spoken or visual information sources, such as the television and the radio: "ik lees nooit, de televisie geeft mij informatie genoeg."; *I never read, I get enough information through watching television.*

A third strategy may not be so much as a strategy, but more avoidance altogether. Most illiterates state, for instance, that they barely read leaflets from medicine or other informational forms. In case of the latter, they use excuses such as: "Dat formulier vul ik thuis wel in."; *I'll fill in that form at home*. Subsequently, they are entirely dependent on relatives or friends at home that are able to help them.

Most of the time, illiterates are able to participate in society by using strategies such as detailed here. Therefore, they do not feel the urge to further educate themselves (Bohnen et al., 2004). However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, their illiteracy does affect (unnoticeably) their functionality in society.

In conclusion, illiterates are able to live under the radar. However, as mentioned by Parikh and colleagues (1996), Roman (2004) Cree and colleagues (2012) and Christoffels and colleagues (2016), illiteracy may also cause problems, both financially and on the health field. Due to these strategies, it is often difficult to identify the target group of illiterates and tackle the problem they face.

Identifying illiteracy

Illiteracy still is a taboo subject, especially in the developed western world, where access to education is generally a given. The shame that illiterates often experience and that leads to the difficulty in identifying illiteracy often transcends into the home environment as well. Parikh, Parker, Nurss, Baker and Williams (1996) illustrated in their research that over 50% of their participants had not revealed their reading deficits to their spouse. Others had not ever mentioned it to anyone. Therefore, the fact that illiterates do not necessarily seek assistance for their deficits, certainly makes it more challenging in formal situations. Bass, Wilson, Griffith and Barnett (2002) examined whether forty-five doctors in primary care, and

combined internal medicine and pediatric functions, were able to identify illiterate patients during their continuity clinic visits, which are longitudinal visits to manage medical and social needs through regular check-ups. Based on the patients' general unwillingness to share their literacy deficits, they hypothesized that these residents would not recognize literacy deficits and overestimate their patients' skills. Therefore, they would not be able to properly identify illiterates who might be at risk for potential health problems. This hypothesis proved to be correct, with residents incorrectly identifying patients with no literacy problems although, in fact, they showed potential literacy problems. Bass and colleagues (2002) thus claimed that the fact that residents may not be able to recognize low literacy skills is problematic at least, because they might not recognize the health risks that may come with low literacy skills. This problem partly arose due to the fact that residents, as well as people in general, do not have access to suitable materials to recognize such deficits and they did not get appropriate training on how to accurately identify illiteracy.

Another sector in which the difficulty of identifying illiterates has been researched, is the educational sector, specifically teachers' ignorance of parents' possible illiteracy (Bohler, Eichenlaub, Litteken & Wallis, 1996). Teachers are often not aware of the possibility of illiterate parents, even though there are plenty of indicators that may point in this direction, such as parents' seemingly lack of interest in their child's progress or their inappropriately responding of written communication.

Lastly, there are specific social places in the Netherlands to which you can go for help and support. These 'wijkteams' might be important places to signal illiterates (Labyrinth, 2016, In Bureau Wending, 2017), but these places are not utilized to its full ability. Employees often feel an inability to act because they are not able to establish a connection between people's problem and illiteracy, partly due to the fact that illiteracy is no prominent subject for professionals as of yet and they feel uncertain on how to refer illiterates. They also

often struggle with their role to make people more self-reliant and they fear to discuss the issue with the target group (Bureau Wending, 2017). However, solutions for these issues are being discussed. Therefore it is important to recognize that we need to consider the way in which the subject will be brought up. This applies to every sector. One might be welcoming the support if the subject is brought up appropriately, but it is also possible that one might respond defensively if that is not the case (Bohler et al., 1996).

The scantily available studies that have looked at illiterates who had been diagnosed taking language courses do claim, however, that people who improve on their literacy skills (e.g. reading) feel happier, are more self-reliant and are more socially active (Houtkoop, Allen, Buisman, Fouarge & Van der Velden, 2012). Hence, it is crucial to determine the best way to facilitate communication with and support for the target group, but as first step it is pivotal to correctly identify the target group.

Demographics of Dutch illiteracy

Every ten years, the PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) is conducted, which targets random samples of adults aged 16-65. This international survey measures the level of utility of several adult skills, one of which is literacy, on a scale of 1 to 500. The results of this survey show that the Netherlands, in comparison with other participating countries, occupies the third place in overall literacy skills with a score of ± 284 , with only Japan (± 297) and Finland (± 288) scoring higher. This is corroborated by the Dutch Court of Audit (2016), that indicate only 11.9% of Dutch citizens to be illiterate, whereas the average result from the PIAAC is 15.4% (Buisman, Allen, Foarge, Houtkoop, & Van der Velden, 2013). It can thus be concluded that the Netherlands both has a low illiteracy rate compared to other countries and a high score on literacy skills. At the same

time, however and upon closer inspection, the Netherlands shows the biggest dispersion in literacy skills between age groups, with a score of 34 points more for the age group of 16-24 (± 295), in comparison with ages 55 and higher.

As mentioned before, illiteracy can be caused, or can cause certain characteristics of life, such as level of education, social-economic status, poverty, and intergenerational literacy. (e.g. Willemse et al., 2011; Cree et al., 2012; Christoffels et al., 2016; Clement and Groot, 2017). Research by Buisman and colleagues (2013) shows that over 40% of the Dutch illiterate population only finished primary school, which means that their educational level is below average. This might be a reason for the fact that Dutch illiterates' income is significantly lower than literates' income (Christoffels et al., 2016). They additionally depend three times as often on social benefits. It is, however, important to note that Dutch illiterates are not necessarily unemployed, but their occupation status, which is measured by prestige, sociologically derived class categories, and social-economic status, (Ganzeboom, de Graaf & Treiman, 1992), is generally significantly lower than that of literates (Christoffels et al., 2016). This might be a reason for the difference in income. The sectors in which illiterates are most employed was illustrated by Christoffels and Kant (2015): most illiterates can be found in facility management sectors, in repair and in manufacturing of goods in factories. These occupations can be found on the lower end of the occupation status scale, according to Ganzeboom and colleagues (1992). In contrast, least illiterates are employed in sectors such as law, accountancy and financial management, which are the sectors of jobs with a high occupational status (Ganzeboom et al., 1992).

As illustrated before, the illiterate population is quite diverse and the illiterate population in the Netherlands appears to be no exception: it is evenly distributed between males and females (44% vs. 56%) and illiteracy also appears to run across all age groups, with the highest percentage being 55 years or older. The largest group of illiterates being the older

adults, can be explained by the recent development of aging in the Netherlands, in which the proportion of elderly people in the Dutch population is increasing. Lastly, one of the main misconceptions of illiteracy in the Netherlands, is the fact that majority of this population consists of immigrants, constituting so-called Dutch as a second language (or NT2) speakers. However, the opposite appears to be the case: almost 55% of the illiterates are native speakers, whereas less than 40% are first-generation immigrants (De Greef, Segers & Nijhuis, 2018).

Bijlsma and colleagues (2016) examined the regional distribution of literacy in the Netherlands. It most mainly shows a relationship between an average literacy score and percentage of illiterates in a certain region. It needs to be pointed out, however, that those provinces where level of literacy on average is low, do not necessary harbour the most illiterates. For instance, in Groningen, there appears to be an average percentage of illiterates compared to the whole of the Netherlands. It also shows a similar literacy level as the national average. However, when you regard each region within the province of Groningen separately, profound differences surface. Regions in the centre of the province have a lower percentage of illiterates and higher literacy score (approximately 8-11% of illiterates and an average score compared to the national average), whereas the North and Eastern regions in the province have a higher percentage of illiterates and a lower score (approximately 13-16+% of illiterates and a somewhat lower literacy score compared to the national average).

As these data are based on factors such as age, social-economical status, it might be interesting to illustrate the ratio of these factors. A total of approximately 580000 people reside in the province of Groningen. Almost 40% of this population lives in the capital of the province, which means that 60% is sporadically located throughout the province with an acreage of approximately 2900 square kilometres (Sociaal Planbureau Groningen, 2019). A low social-economical status often is correlated with illiteracy. The fact that great poverty is

measured in the capital, but a relatively low amount of illiteracy, could be explained by the fact that the capital has a large student population. Students generally have high literacy skills, but are relatively poor at the same time. The North and Eastern regions do have a larger percentage of people who live in poverty, which does support the correlation. In short, although Groningen as a province has often been related to illiteracy levels, it must be concluded that it is also a province where great dispersion between literacy and poverty levels can be detected (Bijlsma et al., 2016; Sociaal Planbureau Groningen, 2019).

Statement of purpose

Having explored the constructs of illiteracy, causes and effects of illiteracy and explanations on why this still is a difficult issue to tackle, it has become clear that illiteracy in the Netherlands, although on a relatively smaller scale than in other countries, is still present. Based on the costs that illiteracy can entail (e.g. Willemse et al., 2011; Cree et al., 2012; Christoffels, 2016), it is important to pay attention to ways in which illiteracy can be decreased. Additionally, it is important to implement interventions effectively once adequate identification of illiterates has taken place.

The present study focuses on several of these aspects by answering the following main research questions that will be answered in two sub-studies:

1. What has been done nation-wide to identify illiterates and to meet their needs?
2. What problems do instructors (language coordinators and language volunteers) encounter during literacy training within the Taalhuizen setting?

The first sub-study focuses on the first research question by creating an inventory detailing Dutch programs to tackle illiteracy, studies and materials that have been developed to aid the decrease of illiteracy by improving communication and literacy training. The second sub-study's focuses on the second research question, by getting an insight look into the practice of

literacy training to determine which aspects of the literacy training might need to be improved.

The entire study will focus specifically on NT1 illiterates as opposed to NT2 illiterates. Indeed, the majority the illiterates in the Netherlands are Dutch. Furthermore, It is more challenging to reach and train NT1 illiterates than NT2 illiterates, because NT2 illiterates tend to feel more obliged to improve their Dutch literacy skills, whereas NT1 illiterates often do not feel that urge.

Study 1

Introduction

In order to contribute to decreasing the illiteracy problem in the Netherlands, it is necessary to obtain a complete picture of the current state of affairs. As mentioned before, many studies, both international and national, have examined factors that can cause illiteracy (e.g. Castro-Caldas et al, 1998; Bohnnen et al., 2004; Clement & Groot, 2017) , the struggles that illiterates may encounter, and the negative effects that may come with illiteracy (e.g. Cree et al., 2012; Christoffels et al., 2016).

Within a Dutch context, however, research has also shown that majority of the NT1 illiterates do not seek assistance for their struggles, due to a lack of information about the possibilities, feelings of shame or not feeling the urge to further educate themselves (Bohnnen et al., 2004). Therefore, most stakeholders agree that this problem and everything that comes with it needs to be tackled primarily. Hence, extensive research has been done the last few decades in which the magnitude of illiteracy in the Netherlands has been mapped out, but also in which solutions and preventions have been suggested and examined in terms of effectiveness. In order to get a complete picture of the state of affairs in relation to illiteracy (policies) in the Netherlands, it is crucial to have access to the most important studies, materials and instruments that were produced and made over the years with the goal to decrease illiteracy in the Netherlands. Additionally, such an overview could help literacy trainers in finding the appropriate materials for their training or it can help the general population in implementing effective interventions.

Therefore, the aim of this first study is to accomplish these goals. First, an overview of several studies and programs about identifying illiteracy, working with illiteracy, and decreasing illiteracy in the Netherlands is presented. Secondly, the same is done for the currently existing instruments and materials that assist and are available for literacy training.

The underlying research question of study 1: "what has been done nation-wide to identify illiterates and to meet their needs?" is therefore broken down into three subquestions:

1. "Which studies have been done with the aim of identifying illiterates and meeting their needs in the Dutch context and what main findings emerged from this work?"
2. "Which programs have been set with the aim of identifying illiterates and meeting their needs in the Dutch context and what main findings emerged from this work?"
3. "Which instruments and materials have been developed with the aim of identifying illiterates and meeting their needs in the Netherlands?"

Method

This first study focuses on creating an inventory of relevant Dutch studies, programs and materials that contribute to reducing illiteracy in the Netherlands. Therefore, this study's results consist of three parts, in which each of these aspects are discussed separately. Due to the immense number of studies about illiteracy, even those specifically geared towards the Dutch context, and all the aspects that come with it, a selection has been made, in which certain aspects of illiteracy are excluded and will not be discussed in this study. The process of choosing which studies and materials are included and excluded is discussed below. Furthermore, an explanation of how everything was analysed to make an organized overview is given prior to the overview itself.

Procedure

In order to prevent an overflow of unnecessary studies in this inventory, it was decided to exclude certain studies, programs and materials. First, the inventory does not include informational studies about the impact of illiteracy on one's everyday life or on their health status, or those studies targeting other negative aspects that come with illiteracy. Instead, the

focus is on those studies that exceed this level through analysing the problem and finding solutions and implementing these in practice. Secondly, studies, programs and materials that mainly focus on NT2 illiterates are not included in this inventory, because this group differs in needs from the NT1 group. NT2 illiterates, for instance, have to focus more heavily on spoken language, because they have another mother tongue, whereas NT1 illiterates already do have the ability to express themselves orally in the target language.

Most studies that are included in the inventory were found through the website of *Stichting Lezen en Schrijven*. This foundation was initiated by princess Laurentien of the Netherlands in 2004 and is committed to connecting stakeholders that are active in the illiteracy issue. Various studies have been conducted in collaboration between this foundation and other institutions, such as The Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (e.g. regionale spreiding van geletterdheid in Nederland by Bijlsma et al., 2016).

Other studies included in the inventory that were not accessed via the foundation, were instead found through using several search terms in Google scholar or through Smartcat, which is an online library available at the Groningen Rijksuniversiteit. Search terms that were used to find relevant studies that suited the inclusion criteria for this study were based on the findings that were discussed in the theory section. For instance, the search term "identifying illiterates" was used based on findings by Bass and colleagues (2002) that identifying illiterates is still a challenge. This resulted in the implementation study: *Toolkit laaggeletterdheid: Toolkit voor omgang met laaggeletterden in de huisartsenpraktijk* by Van Eijk (2011) that is discussed in this study.

Stichting Lezen en Schrijven also contributes to programs that have been set up by the government to decrease illiteracy in the Netherlands (Stichting Lezen en Schrijven, 2017), several of which also will be discussed in this study. Programs that are not specifically targeting interventions for decreasing adult illiteracy, are shortly mentioned, but otherwise

excluded in this study. Studies that regarded the effectiveness of the program's implementation were discussed in the program section instead of in the section that discusses the implementation studies. Materials were also found through the website of Stichting Lezen en Schrijven, but many of the available materials were added later after having been made aware of these through the illiteracy coordinators and trainers that were interviewed in the second study.

This design ensured that a complete picture was obtained regarding studies done in relation to illiteracy in the Netherlands, as well as regarding programs and materials, that fit the inclusion criteria as formulated above. Applying these inclusion criteria set above, 3 studies that focused on identifying illiteracy, improving communication with illiterates and decreasing and preventing illiteracy were found, all of which will be detailed below. Furthermore, the main governmental initiative for decreasing illiteracy is discussed, but the program that is mainly meant to decrease adult illiteracy is highlighted as opposed to all the projects that derived from this initiative. Lastly, a total of twelve methods and their materials have been included in this study.

Data analysis

After collecting the data for the inventory, it had to be analyzed. The final inventory consists of explanations of the different implementations that have derived from these studies. Apart from the inventory of relevant studies, all studies were also compared to chart similarities and divergencies in outcomes and implementations. The materials are displayed in a table. This table covers which skill each material focuses on, the target group for which the material was developed, the design and content, and the different levels in which the materials are available.

The inventory thus presents a structured overview of the studies, programs and materials available in relation to illiteracy in the Netherlands and with that presents a qualitative overview that is itself not used for further quantitative analyses.

Results

Dutch studies about illiteracy

The section below discusses independent studies that focus on conveying information on how to recognize and identify illiterates and on how to improve reciprocal communication. Moreover, studies that cover interventions to prevent further illiteracy and decrease existing illiteracy are discussed. Studies that evaluate the effectiveness of programs such as Taal voor het Leven are not included in this first section and will be discussed later on.

Toolkit on identifying and communicating with illiterates.

The Toolkit Laaggeletterdheid is a Toolkit developed by the Landelijke Huisartsen Vereniging (LHV, 2017) that was meant to help general practitioners with dealing with illiteracy in their patients who visit their practice. The National General Practitioners Association recognized that not only initiatives such as literacy training can be effective in decreasing illiteracy, but that they could also contribute to this movement by lessening the communication gap with illiterates. The toolkit therefore is specifically designed to help general practitioners to identify illiterates and to use appropriate communication to make health-care more accessible for specifically this group. It highlights specific moments in which risks for illiterates can be highest, for instance during consultation or with transferring information about medication and medication use.

The toolkit consists of a list of excuses that are often used by illiterates to disguise their illiteracy, in order to facilitate recognition. These are generally the same excuses as mentioned by Heggers (2019), which you can find in current study's chapter 'strategies for

avoiding illiteracy difficulties'. Next, it offers other simple tips and tricks on how to recognize illiterate patients, such as asking them to write down their name and/or address, or to hand over a document upside down to check whether they turn it around. They emphasize, however, that people might still be illiterate when they are able to do those things. Therefore, they highlight the importance of creating a confidential, welcoming space, because patients may feel more at home. It is more likely for patients to talk about confidential topics, such as literacy problems, when they feel at ease. Patients then might admit more easily to their problems when general practitioners ask simple questions such as: "how confident are you to fill in your medical documents by yourself" to determine whether their patients might have literacy problems. Furthermore, an open attitude is important. Tips such as making eye contact, encouraging patients to ask questions and decreasing the information load are given as well. Lastly, practitioners are encouraged to use simple visual materials, such as illustrations, pictograms and posters to support the information.

The toolkit highlights the importance of discussing the medicine use of patients at every consult to make sure that they understand everything and do not depend on leaflets. General practitioners also should avoid using unnecessarily difficult language. Thus, they should explain the definition rather than use the difficult term.

In conclusion, the toolkit provides tips, tricks and ways to identify illiterates, to encourage illiterates to show their illiteracy and to enhance communication in an understandable and confidential way for the illiterates, all within the context of a general practitioner's consult. However, the fact that this toolkit is specifically created to be used by general practitioners is at the same time a big limitation of this toolkit. General practitioners' consults are specific situations, which means that the interventions that were discussed in the Toolkit are not necessarily applicable in other situation. Furthermore, the fact that no other study about ways to identify illiterates in other settings was found, for instance at school or at

work, shows on one hand the development of prioritizing the illiteracy issue in health-care sectors, but on the other hand the backlog of prioritizing this issue in other settings. It is therefore of vital importance to make such sectors more aware of the issue, so that they can also focus on such interventions. It is important, then, to examine which of the interventions in this Toolkit are setting-specific and which are applicable in multiple situations.

Maximizing communication with illiterates

The toolkit already mentioned the importance of appropriate communication. Oosterberg (2018) focused on maximizing the communication and mutual understanding between literates and illiterates, but again in a general practitioners' situations. Oosterberg (2018) addressed the importance of communication in this setting, because patients are expected to become more autonomous, which can cause problems for illiterates.

A consult, or any other interaction, is only successful when both partners understand the conversation. It is therefore important to make sure that the information is correctly received, particularly because illiterates often pretend to understand the information. Oosterberg (2018) therefore suggests to regularly use the 'teach-back'-method, both throughout and at the end of the consult. With this method, you will ask the patient to tell in his own words what he has understood from the conversation.

More so, it is effective to use non-verbal communication, because this kind of communication often sends the message to the patient when they do not fully understand the spoken language. It helps the patient understand the situation better, but it also helps to put him at ease, which might be an important factor to possibly identify illiterates as well, according to the LHV (2011). An instance of non-verbal communication is to radiate confidence while explaining an issue to the patients, or to use gestures and movements simultaneously with speech. Lastly, Oosterberg (2018) claims that simple language is key and clear for everyone; literate and illiterate alike. Again, aiding the bringing of information with

visual support helps illiterates to understand and remember the content. The simple language then should meet several criteria, as illustrated in figure 1.

- Use short sentences and limit yourself to one message per sentence.
- Speak slowly, articulate clearly and insert enough breaks between sentences.
- Try to use the vocabulary that is most often used by the patients themselves.
- Avoid specific jargon, abstract language use, double negatives, metaphors, proverbs and sayings.
- Try to avoid much variation in your speech
- Repeat important information more than once.

Figure 1: overview of do's and don'ts of simple language use (Oosterberg, 2018, p.232)

Similar to the previously discussed Toolkit, this study also focuses on communication in health-care settings. This thus may limit the usability of these recommendations. Although several tips could possibly be implemented in numeral situations, because autonomy is expected in more settings, it is still important to examine the effectiveness of these communication recommendations in different settings.

Tackling and preventing illiteracy

The studies presented so far have focused on effective communication and identification of illiterates, whereas other studies focus on decreasing illiteracy and on preventing more illiteracy. Decreasing illiteracy is mainly done by offering language courses for illiterates to improve their literacy skills. These programs seem to be quite effective, with illiterates experiencing immaterial benefits. For instance, illiterates feel less shame, are more confident and independent, and are able to read newspapers or books (Faddegón & Achbab, 2018). Literacy training through Taalhuizen, which is one of these programs, will be discussed later on.

It is not only important to work on decreasing illiteracy, but to also work on the prevention of illiteracy from a young age. One of the objectives of the Tel mee met Taal program focuses on prevention of illiteracy, by promoting the importance of reading for children. Furthermore, Christoffels, Groot, Clement and Lam (2017) discussed several interventions aimed at preventing illiteracy in children. Christoffels and colleagues (2017) created a list with interventions that could be used to prevent child illiteracy. These interventions were age-specific and factor-specific, which means that each intervention is aimed at an age group and meant to improve one of the factors that influences the development of children's reading- and writing skills. These are auditory functions, oral language use, executive functions, knowledge related to letters and reading- and writing attitude. Furthermore, factors such as a child's personal environment and school play an important role.

Family literacy programs are instances of such interventions. The goal of such programs is to offer children a rich language environment at home by educating their parents or caregivers. Several of these interventions are meant for an indirect improvement of both the children's and parents' literacy skills, but others are meant to only improve the parents' supporting skills, not their own literacy skills. These family-literacy interventions might specifically be interesting for children of illiterate parents, because these programs are focused on children whose parents support their learning process. Christoffels and colleagues (2017) do, however, mention the necessity of further research into the effectiveness of these family-literacy programs for illiterate parents. Other initiatives such as literacy training in Taalhuizen then, could be more adequately tailored to improve parents' literacy skills.

Programs to decrease illiteracy

In recent years, several initiatives have been set up with the goal to decrease illiteracy in the Netherlands. One of the largest initiatives has been the 'Tel mee met taal' initiative. This is an initiative in which the governmental departments of education, culture and science, of public health, welfare and sports, and of social affairs and employment collaborate in order to prevent those with limited language, numeracy, and digital skills from being excluded in society (Rijksoverheid, 2015). This three-year program started in 2016 and ended in 2018 and they aimed at improving literacy skills of around 45000 people. Additionally, they aimed to reach at least a million children to increase their literacy skills and pleasure for reading, with the overall goal of a better participation in society. The program consisted of five objectives. The first one concerns a local approach through the already existing program 'Taal voor het Leven', which is a program that supports communities in achieving a sustainable and stable way of acting on illiteracy (Stichting Lezen en Schrijven, 2017). This way, Tel mee met Taal ensured that the Taal voor het Leven program became available throughout the country (Stichting Lezen en Schrijven, 2019). Another objective of this initiative was to establish regional language agreements between several stakeholders such as municipalities and libraries. The third goal was to stimulate children to read through the program 'Kunst van Lezen'. Investments in scientific work and studies to gain better insights in reaching the target group (e.g. illiterates) were also done and lastly, it supported regional and local approaches through research and monitoring and building knowledge (Stichting Lezen en Schrijven, 2017).

After the program terminated in 2018 it was officially evaluated through the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in an extensive report. This report illustrated the extent in which each objective has reached positive results and whether the main goals have been

achieved. This goal to improve the literacy skills of 45000 adults has been far exceeded by having reached over 85000 illiterates, of which 40% are still actively working on improving their literacy skills after completing the first course. Furthermore, over one million children have been reached to promote reading. Communication between stakeholders has also significantly improved with 96% of the organisations (289 out of 300) signing language agreements (Sapulete, Asmoredjo, Van der Hoff & Zeeman, 2019). Multiple other positive results were shown, but these will not be discussed in the current study, because not all of these results are relevant for this study's main aim, which is examining the decrease in Dutch adult literacy. The evaluation of objective one, that specifically focused on decreasing adult illiteracy through training, will be discussed later on. The final evaluation overall showed that the program did contribute to putting the illiteracy theme on the map. However, it also showed that the initiators had not fully succeeded in reaching the NT1 group yet. This is still an issue that needs to be tackled, due to the fact that more than half of the illiterates are natives (De Greef, et al., 2018). Another positive outcome of the program was the fact that it caused an impulse for stakeholders to collaborate. However, it is still of importance to make sure that this collaboration is done sustainably. Lastly, there still needs to be a better connection between stakeholders that focus on preventing illiteracy and those that focus on tackling illiteracy (Sapulete, Asmoredjo, Van der Hoff & Zeeman, 2019).

The tackling of illiteracy problems especially has been achieved through collaborating with the existing program: 'Taal voor het Leven'.

Taal voor het leven and Taalhuizen

Taal voor het Leven is a project in which several organisations collaborate to help illiterates develop literacy skills. According to Stichting Lezen and Schrijven (2017), the training is attuned to the illiterates' needs. These trainings typically take place in a so-called Taalhuis, which has specifically been set up to offer literacy training. Taalhuizen are a

physical, recognizable places, often housed in a library, to which illiterates can go if they want to improve their linguistic, numeracy or digital skills. There are currently over 300 Taalhuizen all around the Netherlands (Heggers, 2019). Taal voor het Leven thus collaborated with Tel mee met Taal on its first objective. Therefore, a final evaluation about its impact in those three years has already been done by De Greef, Segers and Ipektzidou (2018). De Greef and colleagues (2018) evaluated the progress of 806 participants on their development in social inclusion through a SIT-instrument (Social Inclusion after Transfer), which is an instrument that measures social inclusion through questionnaires pre- and post project. Furthermore, 887 participants were measured on their development in reading skills through a pre- and post reading-progress test.

The evaluation by De Greef, Segers and Ipektzidou (2018) stated that the project did not only have a positive impact on literacy skills, but also on improvements in the social domain. Majority of the study's participants (between 51 and 70%) experienced an improvement on social inclusion and significant progress was found in participants' reading skills. Furthermore, several participants indicated that the literacy training improved their professional domain, by having a more positive attitude towards their employment market position, for instance by looking more actively for a job.

The extent of participants' progress depended on several factors. First, results showed that women experienced a higher decrease in social isolation than men, because they perceived themselves to be more socially connected. It is, however, unclear which aspects play a role in this social connectedness. Furthermore, significant associations were found between reading skills and factors such as age and years of education. Older participants experienced a smaller increase than younger participants. Lastly, a larger increase was found in participants that went to school over a period of 11 to 15 years. Other factors such as the

instructor, materials, the environment, transfer options and guidance from the volunteer also had a positive effect on the change in social inclusion and literacy skills.

These findings thus show a positive impact of the project on social inclusion and literacy skills. However, it is important to note that it is likely that the participants that took part in this evaluation were those that were most open minded about tackling their illiteracy skills in the first place. This evaluation could thus be biased in the sense that this group does not represent the majority of the illiterates, because, as theory stated, a large number of illiterates are hard to identify and thus are excluded from this evaluation.

Methods and instruments for Dutch literacy training

De Greef and colleagues (2018) illustrated the effectiveness of the Taal voor het Leven project, which was mainly accomplished by setting up Taalhuizen and offering literacy training. There also appeared to be a positive effect of materials on the change in social inclusion and literacy skills in the sense that this was an important contributor to how much progress in their literacy skills participants showed. There are many different materials and methods available to use during literacy training (Stichting Lezen en Schrijven, 2017). Table 1 below provides an overview of these teaching materials. Note that materials for speaking skills are excluded (such as Spreektaal and Melkweg +). This study's main focus is on NT1 illiterates and therefore, it is not necessary to include materials that are suitable for their needs only. The table first of all lists the materials, but also their focus and target group and level of those target groups. The set-up of the materials are also included.

Each of the materials are meant for illiterate adults. However, some materials have specific requirements. To be able to work with 'Lees het verhaal', a literacy level of at least 1F/2F is required, which is similar to A2/B1 level. To be able to work with 'Digisterker', basic digital skills are required. Furthermore, each material has its own target level. Some materials

are available in different levels, whereas others are available in only one level. Most materials have 1F as target level, which can be seen as a beginner's level, similar to A2 according to the CEFR framework. This thus means that these are not meant to get someone to reach the Dutch literacy level of 2F/B1. Methods such as the 'succes-method' or on oefenen.nl have materials of several levels. They start at 'instroom', which is lower than 1F, but also have 2F materials available, which already is more of an intermediate level. 'Succes' additionally has materials that fit in-between levels, for instance after instroom level, but before 1F.

Table 1. Overview of instruments and materials for literacy training.

	Focus	Target group	Design	Level
Succes! Rekenen (Stichting Lezen en Schrijven)	Numeracy skills	Illiterate adults	- 6 booklets.	Instroom
			- Theme-based.	1F
			- Building competences through tasks.	2F
Succes! (Stichting Lezen en Schrijven)	Reading and writing skills	Illiterate adults	- 50 booklets.	(towards) Instroom
			- Theme-based.	(towards) 1F
			- Building real life competences through tasks.	(towards) 2F
Lees het verhaal (de Stiep Educatief)	Reading skills	Illiterate adults (± above 1f/2f level)	- 3 booklets.	Intermediate (2F)
			- 3 stories per booklets.	
			- Stories supported with illustrations. - Stories with themes.	

Puzzel mee (De Stiep Educatief)	Vocabulary and grammar, reading and writing skills.	Illiterate adults	- 3 series. - Additional practice. - Practice through tasks (e.g. fill in the gaps, crosswords).	Beginners (1F)
Oefenen.nl (±17 programs)	Literacy skills	Illiterate adults	- Wide range of programs (e.g. Taalklas, Lees & Schrijf, De Liedjeskast). - Language based and culture based programs. - Multimodal input. - Support through video's and animation. - Interactive exercises. - Practising language skills through engaging tasks. - Input and output based.	'0' level Instroom 1F 2F
Klik en Tik (Uitgeverij Eenvoudig Communi- ceren.)	Basic digital skills	Adults with low digital skills	- 1 Module. - 3 parts (de basis, het internet op, samen op het web). - Step-by-step skill learning. - On computers & the internet.	Beginners (1F)

Digisterker	Digital skills that concern the e-government	Adults with semi-low digital skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 Module. - Chapters supported by written and visual support and tasks. - Step-by-step skill learning. - Socially relevant themes (e.g. online taxes). 	Continuation of Klik & Tik in several aspects. Intermediate (2F)
Taal voor Thuis (Stichting Lezen en Schrijven)	Increasing parents' involvement in children's language development	Parents with children between 2-12 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Course of 6 meetings. - Flexible materials about relevant themes, such as making homework. - Include tasks, language games & question rounds. 	Minimum: parents with functional oral Dutch skills.
Aan de slag met Social Media. (Taal voor het Leven)	Introduction to working with Social Media.	Adults with low digital skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 lessons. - Subject videos with tasks and tips. 	Beginners course Social Media. (1F) Builds on existing digital courses
Werk ze! (Taal voor het Leven)	Getting a job & other basic skills	Illiterate adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digital course. - 8 lessons; 8 subjects. - Video based. - Spoken, visual & written instruction. - Includes additional word list; organized per lesson. 	1F

Voor jezelf	Starting your own business	Illiterate adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digital course. - 6 lessons; 6 subjects. - Video based. - Spoken, visual & written instruction. - Includes additional word list, sorted per lesson. 	1F
(Taal voor het Leven)				
Voor 't zelfde geld	Organizing administration & acquiring overview of finances	Illiterate adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workbook with tasks about. - 20 themes. - Set working order. - Room to add personal finance files in workbook. - Reading, maths and writing tasks. 	1F
(Taal voor het Leven)				

This table showed a wide variety of available materials in different levels. Based on the descriptions about their design, most materials are heavily task-based with real-life topics. It is striking, however, that only a few materials are available in a level other than 1F. This means that they are quite limited. Illiterates with a starting level lower than 1F, for instance, thus have limited options.

Discussion and conclusion

Current study's results illustrate the wide variety of activities and materials that have been set up over the years to decrease illiteracy in the Netherlands. The main research question of this study: "what has been done nation-wide to identify illiterates and to meet their needs?" and its three sub-questions can thus be answered as follows:

Several studies (e.g. LHV, 2011; Christoffels et al., 2017; Oosterberg, 2018; have focused on implementing the theory in practice. A toolkit was created, for instance, to help residents on how to go about identifying and approaching illiterates. Furthermore, tips and methods were suggested to use to ensure effective communication. Lastly, several intervention options of illiteracy have been provided, although not all discussed in this paper. The most prominent program that was set up by the government was Tel mee met Taal, with its main aim being to prevent illiterates from being excluded in society, and indirectly to prevent new illiterates to surface. Literacy training derived from this program, as well as several methods and materials to support this training, as shown in Table 1.

Thus, at first glance, stakeholders and researchers have been very active nation-wide to find ways to identify illiterates and to meet their needs by providing literacy training and materials and other intervention to decrease illiteracy and this study provides a relative good representation of what is done and what should be done. However, some missing components can still be identified that prevent a full understanding of ways of identifying and tackling illiteracy in the Netherlands. There is, for instance, a large amount of materials that can be used for literacy trainings, but most materials are limited to the 1F literacy level. Furthermore, most materials are task-based and use authentic topics, but it is as yet still unclear what the best teaching method would be to combat illiteracy as none of these methods have been formally assessed or evaluated. It is also still quite unclear what is happening with the collaborations between different stakeholders to combat illiteracy together. The studies above provided tactics to use for identifying illiterates in the health sector, but there must be more clarity on which tactics to use in other situations, because some of the tactics that were offered by the LHV (2011) and Oosterberg (2018) may not be applicable in other situations. It seems obvious for these stakeholders to work together and share their knowledge, but based on these studies, this cooperation is still not very effective. More so, to what extent do interventions

such as the family-literacy programs result in actual prevention of illiteracy and do literacy trainings have positive longitudinal, or just short-term effects? It is of the utmost importance for future studies to examine these issues in detail.

Hence, much remains to be done. The second study partly focuses on one of these critique points, namely the ideal teaching method for illiterates and the implementation and, albeit informal, evaluation of some of the materials available for literacy training. Here, the practice of literacy trainings are examined, which gives an insight look from an instructor's perspective on the practice. This way, clearer ideas of do's and don'ts during literacy training can be illustrated, as well as improvements that need to be achieved to maximize the effectiveness of the training.

Study 2

Introduction

One of the initiatives that was discussed in the first sub-study, was the Tel mee met Taal program, which was set up by the government to prevent those with limited language, numeracy, and digital skills from being excluded in society (Rijksoverheid, 2015). One of their points of action was to look at this problem on a regional scale. They initiated Taalhuizen in several regions, which are physical, recognizable places, such as libraries, in which illiterates can work on their literacy skills. The set-up of the Taalhuizen is quite specific. First, illiterates will have an intake with a professional and will be matched by that professional to a volunteer, whose job is to didactically support them in their process to improve their literacy skills.

As illiterates and literatures interact with each other, Taalhuizen thus play an important role in achieving an inclusive society. Here, the illiterates are supported individually, which ideally could mean that the tutoring that they receive is in line with their wishes. However, despite the fact that the Taalhuizen program is viewed as an effective initiative to help illiterates in an approachable way, it is a relatively new program and although the Tel mee met Taal program as a whole has been evaluated in 2018, the functioning of the Taalhuizen in particular has not been investigated in detail before.

This study will examine the practice of training the participants as part of the Taalhuizen domain, with the aim of creating an inventory of the positive and negative aspects of this tutoring environment. This will be accomplished by answering the following research question: "what problems do instructors encounter during literacy training within the Taalhuizen setting?". This inventory can be used as a basis to illustrate what could be improved to facilitate the participants during their learning process.

The three subquestions that are used to operationalize the bigger overarching research question are:

1. Do the characteristics of the participants that are mentioned by the instructors match the characteristics of illiterates provided by previous work?
2. What are instructors' main experiences in teaching and supporting with their participants during literacy training and outside of this setting?
3. To what extent do tutors use the available materials and instruments and do they identify gaps in the content or other aspects of these materials that can assist them during literacy training?

It is important to note that there are two kind of instructors in the Taalhuizen setting; the language coordinators and language volunteers. Both groups are included in this second study and their experiences will be compared for every subquestion. The function of the language coordinators and language volunteers will be explained in the method section.

Method

Participants

For this study, a total of eight participants were interviewed. These participants all worked within the Taalhuizen on supporting illiterates. The participants were divided into two groups. The first group consisted of four language coordinators, who each have a large amount of teaching or educational experience (both in NT1 and NT2 teaching). Their role within the Taalhuizen is to identify and recruit illiterates and to coordinate language volunteers in their designated Taalhuis or Taalhuizen. The second group consisted of four of these language volunteers. These are the people that tutor the illiterates on a voluntary basis, most typically once a week for about an hour. All interviewees for this study were active coordinators or volunteers in the province of Groningen. The main differences between these

groups were, firstly, the educational basis that language coordinators have but that (most) language volunteers lack. However, the language volunteers are typically required to follow a four-day teacher training course before they are allowed to give illiteracy training. Secondly, due to the fact that the coordinators have a relevant educational background and the overall knowledge, they are paid for their job and have a more complete view of the literacy training practice. In contrast, language volunteers only have knowledge of their own tutoring time and experiences and therefore are dependent on their coordinator to a certain extent. Language coordinators are, for instance, their first point of contact when volunteers experience difficulties during the literacy training.

Materials

The participants were interviewed by means of a semi-structured interview, in which a total of 19 set questions were covered, with additional room for the interviewee to give their own input and for the interviewer to ask follow-up questions. The questionnaire was developed based on past research relating to illiteracy, as well as on the existing questionnaire by Anna Pot (2019), which she used for her study on the second language abilities of older Turkish adults. Furthermore, questions about the available materials and instruments were additionally created and added to the questionnaire for the purpose of the current study, as well as questions about participant's experiences during literacy training. The resulting questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

All interviews were recorded with a speech recording app with a specific interview setting on a Samsung Galaxy S9. Furthermore, transcribing and analysing the interviews was done in Microsoft Word.

Procedure

Participants were found through the website 'taalzoeker.nl', which is an initiative by Stichting Lezen en Schrijven, in which Taalhuizen and their contacts throughout the Netherlands can be found (Taalzoeker, 2018). The search option of the city Groningen was chosen, with a radius of 25 kilometres. This means that all Taalhuizen in the city Groningen and 25 kilometres around it were shown on the website. This search query was specified further by searching for Taalhuizen that specifically offered training to illiterates. This search resulted in sixteen available Taalhuizen, some of which had the same initial contact. An e-mail was then composed and send to Saskia Visser (coordinator Wetenschapswinkel Taal, Cultuur en Communicatie) to be checked and revised, before sending it to the contacts. This e-mail included important information, such as the goal of the study (learning more about the practice of literacy training, as well as their positive and negative experiences during literacy training at the Taalhuizen), and the average length of an interview (approximately 30 to 45 minutes).

Most of the contacts either happened to be the language coordinators of the Taalhuizen, or were able to forward the e-mail to the relevant language coordinators. An appointment was made with those coordinators that were interested in cooperating in this study. Subsequently, some of these coordinates forwarded the e-mail to their language volunteers with the request to participate in the study as well. All interviews took place in the libraries of the cities in which the coordinates and volunteers resided. Figure 2 shows these cities and their names.



Figure 2: map of cities where the interviews took place.

Before the start of the interview, participants gave a verbal permission for recording the interview. The interviews took 43 minutes on average, with the shortest recording being approximately 34 minutes and the longest being 61 minutes. Every interview started with the first set question, ended with the last set question, and reviewed every other set question on the questionnaire (unless they were not applicable to a given situation). Throughout the interviews, opportunities for follow-up questions by the interviewer were present, as well as for the interviewee to provide additional input or forward information they deemed important.

The order in which the questions were asked was not set and depended on the answers that were given, so that most questions naturally followed after another. After the interview finished, the recording was stopped. These recordings were loosely transcribed later on, meaning that the interview was not transcribed literally, but the essence of every question and answer was written down clearly so that common themes could be detected. Interviewees,

their stories and personal information they shared about their participants were anonymized in the transcripts and in the results that were extracted from these transcripts and their analysis.

Data-analysis

All interviews were transcribed in the same Microsoft Word document in the chronological order in which the interviews were conducted. The start of every question was indicated with a new bullet point, followed by the answer. This already showed the nature of the interview. One interview, for instance, resulted in a transcription of 50 bullet points, which means that, apart from the set questions, many follow-up questions were asked during the interview. In contrast, another interview only resulted in an 18 bullet-point transcript, indicating that some of the set questions were already covered during another question and therefore did not need to be mentioned again.

As a next step, the interviews needed to be analyzed. However, some of the questions had extensive answers with many sidetracks. Therefore, the questions were divided into four themes based on the answers provided and common themes that were detected, so that all questions could be subdivided into one of these themes. These themes were (1) participants' characteristics, (2) experiences with illiterates, (3) materials and instruments and (4) literacy training experience. A fifth theme consisted of anecdotes or other comments by the interviewees that further explained or illustrated their answers. These anecdotes were not discussed separately, but were used to enrich the results in the four main themes. The questions were distributed into these themes, because most interviews generally flowed this way in the sense that some questions were logically followed by other questions. Furthermore, these themes are in line with the subquestions for this study. The answers by the language coordinators and language volunteers were analysed separately to detect any potential discrepancies in their answers.

As a next step, a concluding answer per question was given, some with a short explanation or additional comments. Figure 3 gives an example of this structure. It shows the question: "do your participants experience difficulties with listening- and speaking skills?", followed by the answer on that question by every language volunteer (hence the four answers). The cursive, bold sentence at the end shows the concluding answer on that question, which is that participants generally do not experience difficulties with listening and speaking. However, IQ can affect these skills.

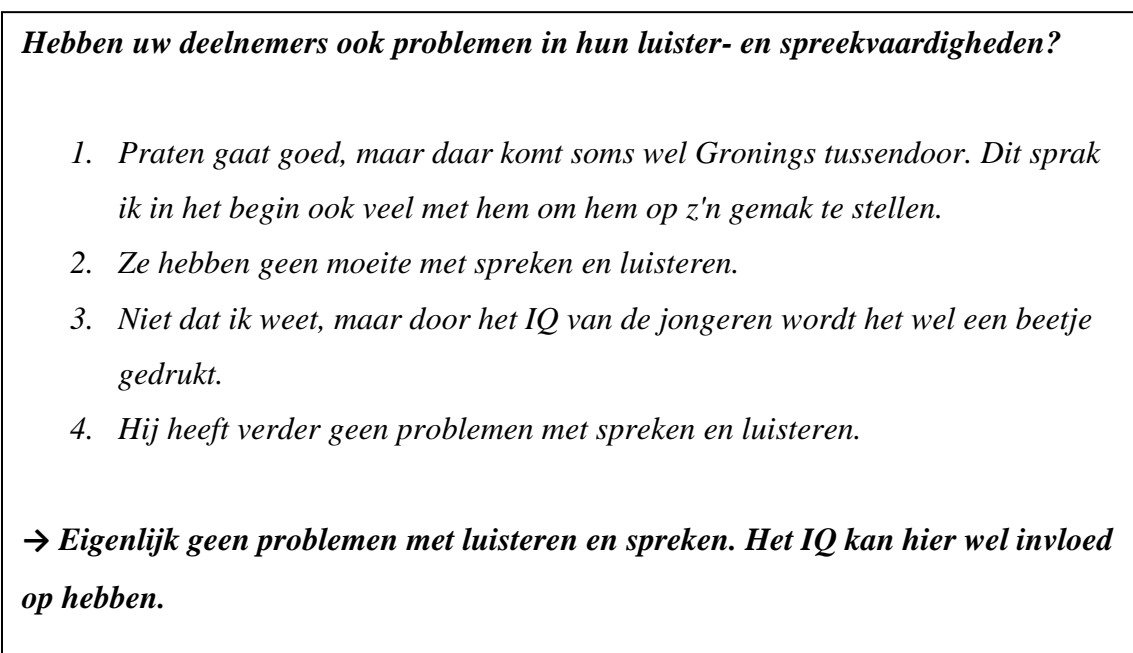


Figure 3: example of analysis per question

Results and discussion

The results below are given per theme. Because of the qualitative set-up of the design, it is impossible to clearly tease apart the respondents' answers and the interpretation of these answers. Therefore, the results and discussion are merged.

Theme 1: Characteristics of illiterates

The first set of questions could be listed under the theme: characteristics of illiterates. Both language coordinators and volunteers stated that in general, their participants were at least 50 years or older. These answers, however, differed both within and between groups, depending on several factors. First of all, one coordinator put the average age and range between 20 and 50 years old. However, she later stated that her participants mainly consisted of NT2 learners, and only a handful of NT1 learners. In contrast, another coordinator, who made a specific distinction between NT1 learners and NT2 learners, estimated the average age of participants as between 60 and 80 years old. The latter was most in line with the language volunteers, who put the average age just above 60. One volunteer had two outlier participants, who were young-adult men with below average IQs which in large parts contributed to their illiteracy. Findings of this study were in line with findings by De Greef and colleagues (2018), who stated that the highest percentage of illiterates was found in the age group of 55 years and up.

Secondly, the answers regarding the maximum educational level of participants were similar. Most of the coordinators as well as instructors stated that their participants had either only finished primary school or had finished another educational trajectory with mbo 2/3 as the maximum. Two instructors also mentioned that their participants most likely had not finished primary school. These results reflect those of Heggers (2019) and the Dutch government, who stated that illiterates tend to have an educational level of mbo 2/3 or less. It is important to note, however, that coordinators are only meant to help illiterates below mbo 2/3 level (according to one of the coordinators), so it makes sense that there are no illiterates with a higher level.

The relatively low educational level of the participants is also reflected in their reading and writing skills, as reported by the instructors and coordinators who were interviewed. Most

of the illiterates were reported to be able to read to a certain extent, but either showed a lower reading comprehension or were reported not to understand grammatical rules. Moreover, six out of the eight interviewees stated that participants either cannot write at all or prioritize reading over writing. In contrast, no noteworthy listening or speaking deficit in the illiterates was identified by the interviewees and all were found to be quite communicative.

One of the set questions that naturally arose after the question about linguistic skills, was the question whether the coordinators and instructors felt that their participants had difficulties with or tended to avoid certain things or activities due to the absence of basic skills. The answers ranged from participants avoiding reading books or official documents, to not being able to keep up with others at work. The interviewees confirmed that participants avoid certain tasks by using other strategies, which is in line with findings by Heggers (2019). One language volunteer, for instance, said that her participant would always make sure have his professional appointments over the phone, because he often does not understand what is written down on the appointment papers. This is exemplified in the observation below:

"Hij vindt het bijvoorbeeld moeilijk in het gemeentehuis. Hij vraagt dan vaak om uitleg en om telefonische afspraken te maken in plaats van schriftelijke afspraken."

Another instructor mentioned that partners, other family members or co-workers often play a large role in supporting illiterates by fixing certain things for them, but this does create a level of dependency:

"Hij is dus erg afhankelijk van zijn collega's en als ze hem ergens links bij laten liggen, staat hij altijd buiten spel."

Situations such as the one mentioned above, which illustrates that one could highly depend on whether co-workers cooperate with them or not, could be motivators for illiterates to eventually decide to seek help. However, as of yet, illiterates do not tend to approach the Taalhuizen by themselves, but are made aware of Taalhuizen through another person or organisation. Indeed, of the seven illiterates that instructors work with, five were brought in by others. Thus, only two came on their own account, partly perhaps because they were not always aware of the existence of Taalhuizen:

"Hij is hier terecht gekomen via een tussenpersoon, een (oud)lerares van de vormingsschool. Hij had zelf nog nooit gehoord van een Taalhuis."

Others reportedly were hesitant to come, because they were ashamed of their illiteracy and did not want to admit that they wanted help. Additionally, the threshold to actually go to a Taalhuis was often seen as too high. These results are similar to those reported by Parikh and colleagues (1996), who also stated that illiterates often feel ashamed. To the question as to whether interviewees felt like the shame has decreased now that they are improving their literacy skills, majority of the interviewees indicated that their illiterates indeed either are less ashamed or feel no shame anymore.

In short, majority of the illiterates were older adults that experienced difficulties in reading and writing skills, but not in listening and speaking skills. Furthermore, illiterates' educational level was often lower than the minimum level set by the government and due to their literacy deficits, some illiterates were ashamed and avoided certain activities. These results align with results from previous research about illiterates' characteristics (e.g. Parikh et al., 1996; De Greef et al., 2018; Heggers, 2019).

Theme 2: Experiences with illiterates during literacy training

The second theme was related to the different experiences coordinators and instructors had had with their participants during literacy training. It is important to note that literacy training, although free of cost, is entirely voluntary. Both the coordinators and the instructors therefore declared that most participants were intrinsically motivated to work on their literacy skills. However, the extent to which participants were motivated was often ascribed to whether they chose to seek out help themselves, or were brought in by another organisation, and the reasons for their participation in the language training. For instance, one of the participants was reported by his instructor as being intrinsically motivated, because he did not want to be bullied for his illiteracy anymore. In contrast, another participant was sent by his employer and thus did not have that initial intrinsic motivation. This difference shows in the sense that the latter is reported to get more easily demotivated, whereas the first was described by his instructor as occasionally too eager and enthusiastic, causing him to want to do more than he could handle at a given point in time.

Interesting is the fact that the participant that lacked intrinsic motivation was brought in by another organisation and felt a great amount of shame for his illiteracy, whereas the enthusiastic participant felt no shame whatsoever, even before he attended literacy training. This might indicate that these factors affect each other and thus might have to be accounted for. This is something other instructors recognized too and identified as a pitfall for many of their participants, because they often underestimate the time and effort that goes into improving their literacy skills. They have to be reminded that:

"wat jouw kinderen in een week kunnen leren, daar ga jij een maand over doen.", which means that, compared to the pace with which their children can learn new skills, it will take adults typically a lot longer to master. Although not further researched, this longer

process could be explained by the potential neural differences between literates and illiterates, as mentioned by Castro-Caldas and colleagues (1998).

Moreover, coordinators mentioned that the participants would receive training once a week for about an hour, which they at the same time indicated to be the maximum amount of time that participants could handle. Instructors agreed by saying that their participants often are mentally exhausted after one lesson. Some cease their training earlier on when the exhaustion becomes too overtly apparent. Instructors and coordinators agreed, however, that it is most importantly that participants feel safe, understood, and confident in their learning environment. That way they will improve, each at their own pace.

Another important aspect of literacy training is the ultimate attainment goal that participants have in mind when they start their literacy training. The reasons underlying their wish to improve their literacy skills often align with the goals they want to achieve. For instance, one participant was reported to set himself the goal of learning to read, because he wanted to be able to read the bible, while another set the goal of being capable of independently functioning in society, without needing support from others and wished to do so by improving his literacy skills. These two examples show that people's aim to go to Taalhuizen can be profoundly different.

With these aims come responsibility and challenges for instructors and participants alike. A challenge that is experienced by the volunteers but interestingly was not structurally reported by the coordinators, is that not all available materials and instruments are suitable for their participants. Some of their participants have a lower literacy level than the easiest existing materials. Others are in between levels and for none of these levels materials are readily available. This will be elaborately discussed as part of theme 3.

Coordinators also indicated that it can be challenging to find a right match between participant and instructor and that collaboration may break down because of, for instance, a

clash in personalities. In this case, it is the coordinator's job to find a better match. This was, however, never mentioned by the volunteers as a challenge. One of their main challenges, however, was to keep stimulating the participant, and to push their boundaries. According to one of the coordinators, motivating participants is an important challenge, because:

"ze gaan in langzame stapjes vooruit en dit gaat vaak niet zoals ze willen. Ze hebben dus sneller de neiging om te stoppen, omdat het niet hun talent is."

Their progress is relatively slow, which can lead to demotivation or the urge to quit or take a break, partly due to the fact that mastering literacy skills is not necessarily their best talent. Additionally, these people are generally more practically oriented and therefore are not used to learning a language this actively in such a classroom-type setting. Thus, in order for literacy skills improvements to take place, instructors need to find a way to teach their participants in such a way that they stay motivated, maintain having fun and become more confident in their own ability. The way in which literacy trainings were provided was relatively similar among coordinators and instructors. Participants receive one-on-one training. Each training typically starts with reflecting on the previous training session, followed by providing an overview of the content of that day's training session at hand. Things from previous trainings that were unclear are subsequently explained again, before volunteers would typically continue on with the training at hand. Discrepancies between trainings arose, however, as both coordinators and instructors indicated, when details about the content of each training are taken into consideration. Some participants entirely focus on reading comprehension, whereas another completes additional exercises. Some are given homework, whereas others would not like to be assigned homework. These differences could be explained by the individual differences between and preferences of participants. Another

explanation could be that participants work at their own pace. This might even differ within one participant:

"Hij vindt zelf dat hij een veel betere beheersing krijgt ... maar soms heb ik het idee dat het vrij vlot gaat, maar soms heb je ook dat het een paar keer slechter gaat."

In other words, both improvement and deterioration can occur during one's learning process.

One of the structural differences between coordinators' and volunteers' answers was the fact that most volunteers include an informal part, either at the beginning or nearing the end of the training, in which they would have a casual conversation about the week both they and the participants are experiencing. This was most likely not mentioned by the coordinators, because they barely were in direct contact with the participants. Instructors would have these conversations to build a stronger, safer relationship with their participant. Furthermore, such conversations would occur when a volunteer noticed a decrease in concentration, in order to prevent demotivation.

Thus far, most instructors and coordinators agree that the method of training their participants one-on-one, partly for privacy and to let them work at their own pace, functions well. One profoundly different answer was given by one of the coordinators, however. This particular coordinator indicated to organize the literacy training in groups in which participants are still able to work at their own pace. Furthermore, during the start of the first training, he indicated to always try to invite the press to make this event more noticeable for others. This stark difference, however, could be explained by the fact that this particular coordinator is in charge of digital courses instead of language training where sensitivities and privacy issues may not be so much at stake. Therefore, he is able to facilitate multiple

participants at the same time, due to the use of fixed methods and due to the accessibility of laptops and larger rooms.

Interviewees lastly agree that the biggest challenge is identifying and recruiting NT1 illiterates. NT2 illiterates are more likely to go to a Taalhuis, because they generally feel more obliged to learn the language in order to participate in the Dutch society. In contrast, NT1 illiterates have been self-reliant to a certain extent their whole life, as shown already by, for instance, Heggens (2019), and therefore, they do not feel the same obligation. Both coordinators and volunteers strive for a better communication between the Taalhuizen and organisations such as food banks and wijkteams who are, according to the coordinators, still too ignorant about the illiteracy problem, to create better possibilities to inform illiterates about the support that Taalhuizen can offer. We need to speak more openly and lightly about the subject to start a conversation in which illiterates are treated equal and where it is no longer a sensitive and taboo subject.

In short, intrinsic motivation was seen as an important indicator for the extent in which a participant improved. The amount of motivation was dependent on whether participants chose to seek out help themselves and whether they feel like they are improving. It is thus seen as one of the bigger challenges to ensure intrinsic motivation throughout the learning process. Another challenge is the fact that NT1 illiterates still are not being reached enough. This raises the question whether the *Tel mee met Taal* program, who claimed that over 45000 illiterates were reached in the last three years, focused enough on NT1 illiterates or mainly on NT2 illiterates. It might be prudent to examine this and to take action in case of the latter. Lastly, instructors, but not the coordinators, mentioned the fact that often, materials are not suitable to be used during literacy training. This problem and the challenges that arise with it will be discussed in theme 3.

Theme 3: Availability and utility of materials and instruments

Although most training structures are similar, as mentioned in theme 2, the content might differ per individual, as well as the materials that are used. The coordinators and volunteers indicated to have access to the materials that are mentioned in Study 1 and indicated to know most if not all of them. Most coordinators claimed this to be a complete range of materials from which volunteers can choose. However, not all volunteers actually make use of them. One volunteer, for instance, stated the following:

"Ik heb alle wenselijke materialen van het Taalhuis tot mijn beschikking, maar ik maak er geen gebruik van ... Ik heb dus ook niet het gevoel dat ik bepaalde materialen mis."

Here, she states that all materials are accessible, but she does not use any of them. A possible explanation for this is that the specific goal of her participant to read the bible did not require any of the available materials. Another reason for not using these materials may be that certain materials, such as the 'succes method', are not suitable for some participants:

"Er is heel veel beschikbaar, maar mijn specifieke doelgroep heeft er weinig aan."

Some of the materials are too difficult, which lead to situations in which the easiest level might already be too challenging for some participants:

"Instroom is het laagste niveau, maar dat is eigenlijk al te moeilijk voor hen".

It also happens that materials might not complement each other, in the sense that there is a gap of non-existing materials between one level and the next, as observed by the instructors:

"Je hebt boekjes en vervolgens een erg groot gat naar de rest van de boekjes."

The critique that was most mentioned by the volunteers, which at the same time differs the most from the coordinators' input, was the effectiveness of the 'succes method'. Stichting Lezen en Schrijven advises Taalhuizen to use this method, because it is available for different entry levels and focused on real life themes, such as "hoe zijn je collega's?"; *working with colleagues*. However, all four volunteers indicated never to use this method with their NT1 participants, because the method does not align with their participants' needs and the themes are not interesting for them. More so, the fixed pattern with exercises that do not necessarily match the goals of the NT1 participants also mean that they do not like to use the method. Lastly, this method starts at a level that some participants have not reached yet, despite the claim by Stichting Lezen & Schrijven that different entry levels are available.

In conclusion, many materials are potentially available for use with native Dutch illiterates, as already mentioned in Study 1, but they do not necessarily align with the needs and level of the NT1 participants. Some methods have a basic level that is already too challenging and other methods have gaps between their levels, which means continuous learning is not guaranteed. These critical reports about the materials were provided by the volunteers and the coordinators did not share these problems. This could indicate that coordinators are not aware of the fact that not all materials are suitable for the NT1 target group, due to a lack of communication between coordinator and volunteer. If this is the case, this problem should be tackled. It is important to note that every volunteer, albeit the lack of suitable materials, indicated to be able to work with their participant and improve their skills.

This thus means that the lack of materials does not necessarily mean bad literacy training. It might be important, however, to start developing more NT1 suitable materials before bringing in more NT1 illiterates to prevent development stagnation due to unsuitable materials.

Theme 4: Positive and negative aspects of literacy training

This last theme could be regarded as a section in which interviewees were able to give their negative and positive opinions about the state of affairs of literacy training in, in this case, the Groningen region. Although this theme is quite similar to the second theme, it was chosen as a separate one, because here, opinions were stated by the interviewees, rather than only providing descriptions and experiences about the literacy training. It was first mentioned in previous themes that part of the difficulty of literacy training lies in constantly challenging and motivating participants. This was again mentioned by interviewees while answering questions about what they felt like needed to improve to make literacy training more effective:

"Als ik ergens tegenaan loop, zit dat voornamelijk in de motivatie. Hoe blijf je mensen motiveren?".

So, how do you keep motivating the participants? This might especially be challenging with the knowledge that materials often are not suitable to be used in literacy training. Two of the volunteers solved this problem by being creative and use materials that are not connected to the Taalhuis, such as newspaper articles or books from the library. This creativity is encouraged by most coordinators, although the coordinators themselves might often be unaware of such difficulties that present themselves practically. However, the amount of creativity is heavily dependent on the volunteer. The difference in the actual trainings, thus,

might also partly be explained by amount of creativity. This is one of the reasons why one coordinator argues for more professionalism. It may be the case that a professional is more likely to be creative and to be able to find solutions when problems occur.

A collective agreement was found about the positive movement with which Dutch stakeholders are trying and achieving to draw more attention to the topic. It is additionally seen as a huge achievement that organisations such as Humanitas and food banks are more willing to work together to draw attention to the issue and to remove the taboo that is still surrounding illiteracy. However, there are still noticeable improvements that can be made. First, although a few solid collaborations between Taalhuizen en organizations are established already, it is still essential according to the coordinators, to constantly keep repeating what is needed and to communicate new ideas. Furthermore, coordinators and volunteers agree that the focus has to shift from reaching NT2 learners to NT1 learners, which still continues to be difficult. They argue that the majority of the NT1 illiterates still do not know about the existence of Taalhuizen. This is corroborated by the fact that given the estimates of number of NT1 illiterates in the Netherlands, so few participants are currently taking part in a literacy training scene offered by a Taalhuis. Then when they do, they resist to go, because they still experience the high threshold, which is still a result from the taboo and low self-esteem that surround the issue. Moreover, there is a lack available materials that are meant to reach the NT1 target group. One of the volunteers remarked the following:

"Ik vind het, terwijl de doelgroep laaggeletterd is, bizar dat er, tenminste in deze omgeving, alleen een foldertje beschikbaar is. Dat is wat lastig als je nagenoeg, dan wel niet kan lezen."

Thus, in her area, they would only give out flyers. This is a far from ideal method, due to the fact that majority of the illiterates do not or cannot read properly. This again shows the importance of collaboration between organisations that can reach the target group more easily. Another solution, as pointed out by one of the volunteers, could be to reach out to media such as television- or radio stations, because these are media through which illiterates often gain information.

Another important question that arises while discussing this subject, is the question on how to properly reach out to these people without crossing their personal boundaries. It is, for instance, not appropriate to approach someone with the statement that he or she is illiterate and therefore needs help. More so, it is important to consider the fact that the majority of the illiterates might experience a certain threshold when entering a library to go to a Taalhuis, due to the vast presence of books and people and the lack of privacy. Volunteers offered to relocate the Taalhuizen to an informal setting. Another solution was to create more secluded spaces in which participants have more privacy and will be less distracted.

The results thus in large part point to the main problem being the reachability of NT1 illiterates:

"Je wil de laaggeletterden niet duwen en trekken, maar je wil dat ze zelf de weg vinden.",

It is not wanted to push or pull illiterates, but they are supposed to find their way themselves. In the end, thus, ideally illiterates themselves find the intrinsic motivation to reach out, but they have to be aware of the initiatives available. However, to accomplish this, we need to find the appropriate ways and tools to allow them the choice. This could be by creating more effective (visual) publicity, or by partaking in a respectable approach.

Another volunteer would like her and the other volunteers to receive travel allowance. No financial support is given for the travels to and from the training, nor for the courses that they had to go to. Offering travel allowance could result, according to her, in a greater willingness by the volunteers to provide more trainings.

One of the coordinators had a critical, but refreshing view on how to go about this issue. She stated that it might be beneficial for both illiterates and those who strive towards reducing illiteracy to revise how illiterates are generally treated and how the trainings are provided. Bringing attention to this topic and reaching the target group often comes at the expense of illiterates' self-esteem. One causal role might be the negative publicity surrounding the topic. It is being portrayed as a bad feature and a problem for every human being. This entirely disregards the strengths and abilities of these people. Another way to illustrate this negative atmosphere, is by discussing a questionnaire by Maurice de Greef (2019) with which the effectiveness of the language trajectories was measured. According to the coordinator, illiterates had to answer these statements with help of their instructors in a time-span that was too short to properly think about the statements. Majority of statements are relevant for the aim of the study. For instance: "the content wasn't too difficult, nor too easy", or "the teacher has taught me how to make time to read and write at work or at home". However, the questionnaire also included statements such as: "I am short of money at least one or two months a year" or "I can ensure for no fights to break out and I can resolve a fight". Apart from the fact that these statements do not have any relevance for the actual study, they are also formulated in a biased way. These statements already assume an unstable financial status and may assume unstable social skills. It is true to a certain extent that studies show a relationship between illiteracy and lower financial, social and economic states (e.g. Sociaal Planbureau Groningen, 2019). However, this does not automatically allow for people to assume such personal characteristics. Quoting one of the coordinators:

"De enquête moet afgenomen worden en dat zijn inderdaad vragen waarvoor iemand zich kan schamen ... vragen over je financiële status, alsof je dom bent."

With this quote, she indicates that it makes sense for illiterates to feel ashamed when they are constantly confronted with such statements. It is an undeniable fact that researchers such as De Greef do not have bad intentions. The way in which such enquetes are composed, however, might derogate an illiterate's self-worth. It is therefore important not to lose track of the main goal, while committing to this cause, by giving attention to secondary prejudices, such as loneliness and an unstable financial status. Instead, we should strive to support illiterates where we can and to boost their confidence by reducing the negative publicity.

In short, the interviewees indicated that the collaboration between Taalhuizen and organizations need to be improved in order to reach more NT1 illiterates. Another improvement that could help the reachability of NT1 illiterates, is to re-evaluate the way in which illiterates are being approached. The current way only increases the chance for illiterates to become ashamed and hide their deficit instead of addressing them.

Conclusion

This study aimed at getting an insight look at the literacy training practice in Taalhuizen in Groningen by interviewing the coordinators and volunteers that provide these trainings, to see what problems they encounter and what improvements can be done. This was accomplished by answering three subquestions. The characteristics of the illiterate participants indeed matched most of the characteristics of illiterates provided by previous work. Furthermore, interviewees experienced an overall intrinsic motivation, however, the degree of motivation was dependent on several factors. A positive development of

collaboration between Taalhuizen and organisations was experienced, but interviewees indicated that this collaboration does not yet show positive results. Recruiting and identifying NT1 illiterates is still a challenge, as well as keeping illiterates motivated when they are receiving training. One coordinator addressed the negative publicity that still surrounds the illiteracy issue. So overall, although several positive experiences were shared, a fair amount of negative experiences were addressed that need to be looked into. Lastly, which answers the third sub-question, the interviewees are familiar with most of the materials, but majority of these materials are often not used, because they are not suitable for their participants due to gaps in the content or no alignment between materials and personal goals.

These findings illustrate that instructors (both coordinators and volunteers) indeed encounter problems during literacy training. The most important problems are difficulties in identifying and recruiting NT1 illiterates, motivating participants during literacy training, not being able to use certain materials due to a lack of suitability and lastly, the negative publicity that still surrounds the illiteracy issue. In order to decrease the illiteracy issue in the Netherlands, such problems need to be tackled.

Such a small, qualitative, empirical study, however, comes with several limitations and areas of improvement. First off, coordinators were found throughout the province of Groningen. They were thus able to talk about their experiences with illiterates in their area, which resulted in data from different areas. In contrast, the volunteers were located in the Northern and Eastern part of the province, which is a smaller area. Therefore, it can be concluded that participants were not evenly distributed. This might have had an effect on the results of this study. Therefore, further research should consider an even distribution to see whether results of that study differ from the current study.

Secondly, current study's main focus was on experiences of coordinators and volunteers, which are the people that work with illiterates. However, in order to get a

complete overview of the actual practice, it might be beneficial to consider interviewing illiterates themselves. Lots of research has already been done in which illiterates were directly contacted. It might be an additional value to examine whether illiterates experience similar problems during literacy training, or whether they encounter different challenges. Moreover, it could have been an added value if not only interviews with coordinators and volunteers were conducted, but if the trainings were additionally observed. Observing the training could rule out the possibility that what was said by the interviewees does not match the actual practice.

Another limitation was the fact that, although data was collected through a semi-structured interview, it still was a partly biased interview. Studies that were read previously to the interviews, gave a one-sided view of the issue. Illiteracy is often associated with poverty, low social-economical status and an increase in health risks (e.g. Cree et al., 2012; Christoffels et al., 2016). It is natural to see this as an issue and to want to solve this problem. Therefore, the approach has often been that illiterates need to improve their literacy skills and that support has to come from the literate population. As a result, current study's questions such as: "Are your participants ashamed of their illiteracy" and "In which aspects of life do they struggle the most", are biased of nature. A great point of critique thus is the fact that the illiteracy issue is still surrounded by a negative atmosphere. This general negative view of illiterates could come at the expense of illiterates' idea of worthiness. We might have to re-evaluate the way in which we look at the topic. To what extent should they have to adapt for something that we have made a problem of?

General discussion and conclusion

This study focused on decreasing NT1 illiteracy in the Netherlands by providing an inventory of important available studies, programs and materials in the first sub-study and by

providing an insight look into the practice of NT1 literacy training to present problems that need to be solved to help decreasing NT1 illiteracy in the Netherlands in the second sub-study. The first sub-study showed that several studies are one-sided and thus claimed that it should be examined whether these findings are applicable in other settings. It should furthermore be noted that the positive results from the Tel mee met Taal program could be biased, due to the fact that the participants did not accurately represent the illiterate population. It is additionally very likely that most participants were NT2 illiterates, due to the fact that NT1 illiterates still are hard to identify. It is therefore important to critically look at these results and to further examine whether these findings can account for the entire illiterate population, or for just a small sample. It lastly seems like the wide variety of available materials are quite limited to one level, which means that illiterates on different levels are excluded from using those materials. Additional materials thus should be developed to fill these content gaps.

The second sub-study then, focused on one aspect of decreasing illiteracy in the Netherlands, which was improving adult literacy skills through literacy training in Taalhuizen. The results of the interviews indicated that changes must be made to improve the literacy training process. First, identifying and recruiting NT1 illiterates need to be prioritized more. Taalhuizen and organisations such as Humanitas, wijkteams and food banks must collaborate more efficiently and NT1 illiterates need to be made more aware of the opportunities that Taalhuizen provide by, for instance, developing appropriate materials for it. Furthermore, the gap in materials that was mentioned in Study 1 was also indicated in Study 2. Therefore, materials must be developed to close the content gap, while considering the specific wishes of NT1 illiterates. It may also be important to assess more closely whether the literacy training environment negatively influences illiterates' learning process and to improve this environment when this indeed is the case. Lastly, the negative atmosphere that surrounds the

illiteracy issue, according to one of the coordinators, must be examined further. It has to be determined whether this is a myth or something that illiterates experience themselves as well. In case of the latter, action should be taken to convert this negative atmosphere in a positive message.

Concluding, it is thus important to examine every possibility on how to effectively solve these illiteracy problems in the Netherlands. Further research must decide on options and consequently must show whether these options work or not. It is important to note, however, that these solutions do not necessarily drastically decrease the illiteracy issue. It remains an ongoing progress of examining, assessing and solving new issues that will arise over time, but changing both small and big things now, might pay off eventually.

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Appendices

A: semi-structured questionnaire.

Here you will find the set questions that were asked. Although this questionnaire is in English, the interviews were entirely in Dutch. Therefore, this is a translated version from the original Dutch questionnaire that was drawn up.

In this context, participants are not those that are being interviewed, but the Dutch illiterate people. The language coordinators and language volunteers do not call them 'students', but participants, because the literacy training is an informal way of teaching.

1. What is the overall mean age and range of the Dutch illiterate participants that you work with?
2. What is the highest educational level that the participants generally have finished?
3. What is the average writing and reading level of the participants and are there cases of participants that either cannot read or write at all?
4. Do the participants experience difficulties in listening and speaking as well, or are the problems mostly based on their reading and writing skills?
5. Do you notice that some participants avoid certain things because of the fact that they are illiterate? if so, what kind of things? (both in their everyday life and during the literacy training)
6. Did the participants approach you (thus the Taalhuis) themselves, or were they brought in by other instances? In the last case, which reasons do they have for not approaching you themselves and through which other medium were they brought in?
7. During which moments do participants experience most difficulty in everyday life?
8. What would you say is the main goal of the participants that follow the literacy trainings?

9. To what extent are the participants motivated to learn Dutch?
10. What are reasons for them not to be motivated to learn Dutch and is this reflected in their learning process?
11. In what aspects is training NT1 illiterates different, more/less challenging than training NT2 illiterates or literate people?
12. Did you have an educational background before you became a language volunteer or did you only follow the literacy training course?
13. Which challenges do you yourself encounter when you give the literacy training?
14. What methods (instruments, books, e-learning opportunities etcetera) do you know of, which ones are available to you and which ones do you actually like and use?
15. ~ties in to the previous question~ how do you proceed personally in giving the literacy training?
16. What would you describe to be the ideal way to train illiterate people?
17. Do you feel like this way has already been achieved, and if not, which aspects are you still missing?
18. What do you experience as positive activities to support illiteracy in the Netherlands and what do you still miss concerning the support that is currently given?
19. Do you have additional comments or subjects that you would like to address concerning support for illiterate people?

B: analysis of semi-structured interviews.

In this appendix, you will find the (Dutch) analysis of the interviews. It shows the answers of every question of every interviewee, divided by group. One overall concluding answer per question is also written down. These concluding answers are used for the concluding sections of the second study.

Group 1: Language coordinators

Theme 1: Characteristics of illiterates

Wat is de gemiddelde leeftijd en range van uw deelnemers?

1. 50+, maar er zitten zowel wat jongere mensen als wat oudere mensen tussen
2. Tussen de 20 en 50 (voornamelijk NT2).
3. Tussen de 60 en 80, dus de wat oudere populatie.
4. Nog geen 1. Volgende week eerste intakegesprek.

→ over het algemeen 50+

Wat is het hoogste opleidingsniveau dat de deelnemers doorgaans hebben afgerond?

1. Veel NT1ers zijn naar de lagere school geweest en zijn daarna concreet aan het werk gegaan (heeft met leeftijd te maken). Als ze daarna wel een opleiding hebben gedaan, is dat meestal op mbo1, maximaal mbo 2 niveau.
2. We mogen alleen mensen bedienen die onder niveau 2f zitten, dus onder mbo 2/3 niveau.
3. Dit verschilt, maar mbo 2/3 is vaak maximaal. Sommigen zijn direct gaan werken na de lagere school, sommigen hebben daarna ook wel een mbo of vmbo afgemaakt. Het is ook een beetje afhankelijk van de periode die daarna komt en of zij vervolgens niks meer doen met lezen, schrijven of rekenen.

→ Ofwel lagere school, ofwel maximaal mbo 2/3(?)

Wat is het gemiddelde schrijf- en leesniveau van uw deelnemers? Zijn er ook mensen die niet kunnen lezen en/of schrijven?

1. Schrijf en leesniveau is laag. Ze hebbe het lang gered zonder, maar er is altijd een *aanleiding* om de basisvaardigheden te willen ontwikkelen. Meeste moeite met lezen en digitale vaardigheden. Schrijven willen ze eerst vaak niet.
2. voornamelijk het schrijven is erg moeilijk. Lezen valt soms mee, maar schrijven loopt dan achter. Soms lopen ze op beide aspecten achter, waardoor ze eigenlijk op een 0 niveau beginnen.
3. Omdat wij bezig zijn met digitale cursussen weet ik dat niet precies. Wel komt het voor dat we erachter komen dat iemand de basiscursus niet aankan, omdat hij moeite heeft met het beantwoorden van de vragen. Die verwijzen we dan door naar een Taalhuis.
4. De grootste groep kan nog wel aardig lezen, maar de grootste moeite ligt dan bij de grammaticale regels. Ze lezen natuurlijk ook weinig, omdat dat niet iets is wat ze leuk vinden en veel mee bezig zijn.

→ Beiden niveaus zijn laag. Lezen gaat meestal nog wel aardig, schrijven loopt meer achter.

Hebben uw deelnemers ook problemen in hun luister- en spreekvaardigheden?

1. Bij NT1ers speelt spreken nooit een rol, dat gaat wel goed.
2. -
3. -
4. Ze zijn wel gewoon communicatief. Ze zijn verder gewoon praktisch ingesteld, waardoor ze de andere aspecten van taal niet direct nodig hebben.

→ Dit is eigenlijk nooit van toepassing.

Heeft u het gevoel dat uw deelnemers bepaalde dingen (zowel in het dagelijks leven als tijdens de training) niet doen of vermijden omdat zij laaggeletterd zijn?

1. De voornaamste aanleiding dat mensen naar ons toekomen is dat ze merken dat ze het lang gered hebben zonder hulp, maar at ze toch basisvaardigheden missen (niet kunnen lezen van officiële documenten of niet kunnen voorlezen). Deelnemers hebben ook vaak dat ze anderen om hulp vragen bij iets. Wij willen juist dat ze dat zelfstandig kunnen.
2. ~zelfde antwoord als vraag 1, thema 2.
3. -
4. -

→ Vaak komen ze er toch achter dat ze basisvaardigheden missen en daarom dingen niet kunnen. (zie ook vraag 1, thema 2)

Hebben uw deelnemers het Taalhuis zelf benaderd of zijn zij hier terecht gekomen via een tussenpersoon?

1. Dat varieert. Een deel wordt (vrijwillig) doorgewezen door professionals in 'wij-teams', kredietbanken, humanitas, voedselbank, etcetera. Soms komen mensen uit zichzelf doordat een ander naar het taalhuis komt en die nemen ze dan mee.
2. Via andere tussenpersonen, taalmeter (hebben ze niet overal), gemeente, consulenten etcetera. Dus voornamelijk vanuit andere organisaties of via via.
3. Ze komen vaak vanuit werkplein waar ze doorverwezen worden voor taal of digitaal.

4. Ik denk dus dat ze niet naar die cursussen gaan, omdat ze het uiteindelijk toch niet gebruiken. En ik vind het heel goed dat er iets gedaan wordt voor hen die wel hulp willen, maar die er niet vanaf weten, maar het wordt nu wel een soort hulpverleners functie.

→Varieert, maar meestal vanuit tussenpersonen of organisaties zoals werkplein, voedselbank, taalmeter, van/naar digitale cursussen

De eerste stap komt voornamelijk doordat ze ergens door belemmerd worden in hun dagelijks leven?

1. Ja, zowel formele (baan zoeken) als informele (skypen met kinderen in het buitenland) redenen. Meestal is er wel echt een concrete aanleiding.
4. Je doet na een tijdje ook wat de maatschappij van je verwacht. De hiërarchie zit er best lekker in dus na een tijdje gaan ze het dus maar gewoon doen.

→ Kan zowel formele als informele redenen hebben.

Disclaimer: Doen zij niet na een tijdje wat de maatschappij verwacht, door de duidelijk aanwezige hiërarchie?

Heeft u het wel eens met uw deelnemers over het feit waarom ze niet uit zichzelf zijn gekomen?

1. Vaak is het onbekend voor ze of is het een te hoge drempel om zomaar op iemand af te stappen. Vaak is het ook bijvoorbeeld de werkgever die ze aanspoort iets te doen aan hun taal.

2. De groep autochtonen willen vaak niet toegeven aan hulp; er zit vaak schaamte bij.

Deze groep heet ook strategieën gevonden voor momenten in het dagelijks leven

"hebben jullie de pindakaas verplaatst, want ik kan het niet meer terugvinden", maar

dat wordt lastiger bij formele zaken.

→ Vaak is de drempel te hoog of willen ze niet toegeven aan hulp.

Disclaimer: ze vinden dat ze het niet nodig hebben omdat ze het altijd al hebben gered?

Theme 2: Teachers' experiences during literacy training (and outside this setting):

In welke momenten hebben de deelnemers het meeste moeite in het dagelijks leven?

1. De laaggeletterdheid problematiek komt bijna nooit alleen, maar is een integraal gebeuren, waarbij sociale eenzaamheid, armoede, financiële problemen enzovoorts een rol spelen. Het is vaak het pakketje waar men tegenaan loopt. Het dagelijks functioneren heeft dus te maken met de hele problematiek.
2. Brieven lezen, gebruiksaanwijzingen, vaak een combinatie met bijvoorbeeld schulden, wat vaak terug te vangen is in het feit dat mensen niet goed kunnen lezen. Het kunnen verschillende ingangen zijn. Iemand kan bijvoorbeeld ook binnen komen met de vraag of hij kan eren om beter boeken te lezen.
3. Het feit dat veel belangrijke dingen tegenwoordig digitaal moeten, belastingaangifte, zorgverzekering, dwingt ons om digitaal te gaan. Dat is voor vele mensen een schok geweest.

→ Het is vaak een integraal probleem, in combinatie met andere dingen zoals financiële problemen of eenzaamheid. Ook de tegenwoordige digitalisering kan een trigger zijn.

Is de focus voornamelijk op het taalaspect of ook op andere aspecten?

1. Het is gericht op het bevorderen van de ontwikkeling van basisvaardigheden. Als het neerkomt op grotere problemen, zoals schuldsanering, worden ze doorverwezen.

→ ontwikkelen van de basisvaardigheden.

Wat is het hoofddoel van de deelnemers die bij u terecht zijn gekomen om geholpen te worden?

1. Vooral het verbeteren van de basisvaardigheden, maar *daardoor* om beter te kunnen participeren in de maatschappij.
2. Dat iemand het zelfvertrouwen krijgt en afkomt van het minderwaardigheidscomplex, maar ook om beter in de maatschappij te kunnen functioneren.
3. Veel mensen komen omdat ze iets zelf willen kunnen doen. Vroeger waren er meer sociale redenen, zoals met kinderen in het buitenland willen kunnen mailen, maar dit is minder nu. Het feit dat de blauwe brief verdwijnt zorgde voor een schokgolf, omdat dit nu ook digitaal moest.

→ Beter kunnen participeren in de maatschappij en meer zelfvertrouwen krijgen en afkomen van het minderwaardigheidscomplex.

In hoeverre zijn uw deelnemers gemotiveerd om het Nederlands te leren en welke redenen hebben zij om niet gemotiveerd te zijn en is dit terug te zien in het leerproces?

1. Ja, allen zijn erg gemotiveerd.

2. As mensen vanuit zichzelf komen is de motivatie meestal aanwezig. Als iemand wordt gestuurd vanuit een organisatie kan het zijn dat de motivatie minder is.
3. Er zijn natuurlijk individuele verschillen, maar deze zijn niet heel groot. Ook niet tussen NT1ers en NT2ers.
4. Er zit ergens een motivatie in, maar dat komt denk ik omdat iedereen op zo'n 'negatieve' manier naar hen kijkt; zo zwaar. Je weet heel goed wat aanzien en status heeft en wat niet. Ook zie je vaak dat hun progressie veel langzamer gaat dan dat ze denken dat het gaat, dus stoppen is ook heel normaal, omdat het gewoon hun talent niet is.

→De motivatie is meestal goed aanwezig, ondanks individuele verschillen. Wel kan het zijn dat mensen die uit zichzelf komen gemotiveerder zijn dan als ze gestuurd zijn (zie volgende vraag).

Is er een verschil in motivatie van mensen die zelf zijn gekomen of gestuurd zijn?

1. Eigenlijk niet, want de verwijzing heeft geen verplicht karakter, dus het is altijd hun eigen keuze.
2. Mensen kiezen uiteindelijk uit zichzelf of ze gaan of niet. Men merkt hoe langer ze in het traject zitten, hoe zelfverzekerder ze zijn en hoe meer ze het belang van de cursussen in zien; dit is natuurlijk noodzakelijk. Als iemand gestuurd is omdat iemand anders vindt dat iemand het beter moet kunnen, dan is dat niet zo'n goede optie.

→Het valt wel mee, omdat het nooit een verplicht karakter heeft. Ook merken ze tijdens het traject steeds meer het belang van de cursussen dat kan helpen bij de motivatie.

Wat zijn de grootste verschillen die u ziet als u de training van NT1ers vergelijkt met training van NT2ers of van 'normale studenten'?

1. Er zijn niet erg grote verschillen, want we werken erg vraag gestuurd. Bij beide groepen (NT1&NT2) moet je aansluiten op het niveau en vervolgens rekening houden met leerstijlen, achtergronden enzovoorts. Maar NT1ers hebben minder woordenschat, grammatica en zinsbouw nodig, omdat zij de spreektaal vaak wel machtig zijn en daardoor niet zoveel problemen hebben met het formuleren van zinnen.
2. NT1ers hebben vaak meer moeite om binnen te stappen dan NT2ers. Verder krijgen NT1ers en NT2ers verschillende trainingen. NT2ers willen bijvoorbeeld beter leren spreken. NT1ers voornamelijk beter kunnen lezen en schrijven.
3. De taal speelt natuurlijk een grote rol. Sommige NT2ers hebben bijvoorbeeld een tolk. Ook ligt het erg aan de wilskracht en het rugzakje van de NT2ers.
4. Ik heb een project: 'samen verder', dat gericht is op groepsgewijs iets doen en vervolgens in niveau groepen dingen bespreken. Taalhuizen zijn eigenlijk 1 op 1 concepten. Dat 'samen verder' concept voelt voor mij beter.

→De twee groepen willen natuurlijk iets anders leren. NT2 spreken, woordenschat etc., NT1 meer lezen en schrijven. Taal speelt natuurlijk een grote rol, maar ook individuele verschillen.

Welke uitdagingen komt u tegen wanneer u aan het werk bent met uw deelnemers?

1. Is het wel eens gebeurd dat deelnemers stoppen, of wordt hier dan een nieuwe oplossing voor gezocht?

Het gebeurt niet vaak, maar vrijwilligers moeten wel aangeven als er iets aan de hand is, want dan wordt er geprobeerd een oplossing met elkaar te zoeken. Als dit niet lukt kan een deelnemer stoppen of een andere vrijwilliger zoeken.

2. Als deelnemer en taalvrijwilliger toch niet goed gekoppeld is, proberen we iemand anders te regelen.
3. De grootste uitdaging die ik tegenkom is het bereik naar deze mensen met z'n allen als organisaties. Ik wil een zo breed mogelijke groep op de hoogte stellen wat voor mogelijkheden er vanuit de bibliotheek en partners zijn om je te ontwikkelen. Zowel de laaggeletterdheid kwestie als de samenlevingskwestie, om eenzame en niet zelfredzame mensen te betrekken bij activiteiten.
4. Ik wil die manier graag kunnen doen met NT1ers, maar het is nu heel moeilijk om genoeg NT1ers te vinden om dit te kunnen doen. En het vrijwillig verplicht maken van die cursussen ligt mij dan ook niet zo lekker.

→Het koppelen van deelnemer aan vrijwilliger kan soms lastig zijn of stuk lopen. Dan moeten we iemand anders vinden. Grootste uitdaging is ook het bereiken van nieuwe deelnemers.

Theme 3: Availability and usage of existing materials and instruments

Welke instrumenten en materialen heeft u ter beschikking tijdens de training en welke hiervan gebruikt u?

1. Makkelijk lezen (1), conversatiegroepen (2), materiaal van stichting lezen en schrijven dat ingedeeld is op 3 niveaus? *instroom*: halverwege groep 5 basisschoolniveau, *1f*: t/m einde basisschoolniveau, *2f*: tot aan mbo 2/3 /vmbo niveau. Materiaal is voornamelijk gericht op NT2, maar gaan over iemands interessewereld. Er zijn ook mappen die helpen bij 'werkzoeken', rondom voel je goed, gericht op gezondheid. Alles wordt ook gebruikt, afhankelijk van de deelnemer en de leervraag.

2. Succesmethode, leesboeken, oefenen.nl en boeken die daarbij horen. Ik stimuleer ook creativiteit; deelnemers mogen zelf dingen meenemen, wekelijkse kranten met thema's op verschillende niveaus waarmee vrijwilligers kunnen helpen.
3. Klik en tik, de basis van het internet en een stukje social media, en Digisterker, leren omgaan met de digid in alle vormen) worden gebruikt. Deze cursussen blijven actueel, waardoor er altijd up-to-date cursusmateriaal is.
4. Als ik een deelnemer heb zou ik gewoon aan de slag gaan zoals het bedoeld is in het Taalhuis, maar het liefst werk ik natuurlijk met mijn 'samen verder' systeem. Ik moet ook voelen bij andere coördinatoren dat mij ruimte gegeven wordt om mijn mening te kunnen bespreken, maar dat heb ik nu niet en ik heb geen zin in strijd.

→ zie ook uiteindelijk overzicht study 1: succesmethoden, leesboeken, opdrachtboeken, klik en tik, digisterker, kranten met thema's op niveau, conversatiegroepen (voornamelijk voor NT2), oefenen.nl & daarbij behorende opdrachten en materialen.

Hoe gaat u persoonlijk te werk?

1. De vaste pedagogiek is in elke lesopbouw is achteruit blikken wat er gedaan is, vooruit blikken wat we deze les gaan leren, uitvoeren, terugblikken op wat we gedaan hebben. Meestal gebeurt dit 1 op 1, maar dit kan ook in conversatiegroepen.
2. Meestal 1-op-1, soms 1-op-2. Ik probeer deelnemers duidelijk te koppelen aan goede vrijwilligers. Ik kijk bijvoorbeeld naar bedeelde hobby's, maar ook naar niveau en voorkeur.
3. Van de eerste cursus maak ik een feest. De wethouder kan komen, ik nodig regionale pers uit, waardoor dit zichtbaarder wordt in de straten. Ik zit in een ruimte met laptops en iedereen werkt zelfstandig aan zijn cursus. Als we werken met digisterker zitten er

wanden tussen de mensen i.v.m. privacy. Ik wil graag een doorgaande leerlijn hebben in de bibliotheken, dus als ze een cursus hebben afgerond wil ik ze de gelegenheid bieden tot iets nieuws.

4. Samen verder.

→ Meestal wel een vaste structuur, maar dat is afhankelijk van persoon. Terugblikken, aan de slag, vooruitblikken. 1 op 1 (digitale cursussen in groepen). Digitale cursussen worden ook 'groots' gemaakt.

Wordt er soms ook gekozen om niet aan de slag te gaan met de leermethoden?

1. Ja, mensen willen bijvoorbeeld hun folders van thuis willen lezen. Altijd in succesboekjes werken wordt saai, dus afwisseling is goed. Ook dingen als woordpuzzels kunnen gebruikt worden, maar dit is afhankelijk van de creativiteit van de vrijwilliger.

→ Ja. Eigen input van deelnemers mag ook altijd, of creativiteit van de vrijwilliger wordt ook aangemoedigd.

U bent zelf erg bewust van wat deelnemers nodig hebben en welke materialen er zijn, hoe zit dit bij de taalvrijwilligers?

1. Die zijn deels afhankelijk van mijn advies en daar maken ze ook zeker gebruik van.
2. De taalvrijwilligers worden geïnstrueerd over deze en nieuwe materialen. Als taalvrijwilligers denken dat ze iets missen, kunnen ze terecht voor advies.

→ Taalvrijwilligers worden door ons ondersteund en geadviseerd over nieuwe en geschikte materialen.

Welke materialen of instrumenten mist u nog specifiek?

1. De succesmethode is vanaf instroom t/m 27. Sommige mensen die echter binnenkomen zitten nog onder de instroom. Die eerste stap mist dus nog.
2. De derde stap na de digitale cursussen.

→ De eerste stap voor instroom en de derde stap van digitale cursussen (aan dit laatste wordt op dit moment gewerkt).

Wat is volgens u de ideale manier om laaggeletterden te trainen, is dit al bewerkstelligd en zo niet, wat mist u nog?

1. Zonder de vrijwilligers tekort te doen, zou ik meer professionals willen hebben.
Ondanks dat de vrijwilligers hun best doen, vraagt dit vraagstuk om professionele specifieke aanpak, waar je niet alleen de basisvaardigheden aanbiedt middels vrijwilligers, maar wat ook vraagt om een bredere integrale aanpak. De krachten moeten gebundeld worden.
2. Ik blijf altijd in contact met mijn taalvrijwilligers en we kijken goed naar wat een deelnemer kan, wil en hoe we diegene het beste kunnen helpen. Als dit lukt, en ik kan bijvoorbeeld iemand richting een opleiding helpen, of als iemand aangeeft dat diegene zich zelfverzekerd en zelfredzaam voelt, heb ik daar een heel goed gevoel over.
3. Ik wil dus een doorgaande leerlijn hebben. De eerste twee cursussen klik en tik en daarna digisterker zijn goede cursussen. Ik ben er echter tegenaan gelopen dat we mensen die digisterker afgerond hebben niks meer te bieden hebben. Daarom heb ik zelf contact gelegd met senioweb om dit door te ontwikkelen en om cursussen te maken waar men bijvoorbeeld met excel kan gaan werken en fotoboeken kan maken.

We gaan vast de komende tijd nog tegen dingen aanlopen, maar sinds ik de derde stap heb ontdekt ben ik vooral daarmee bezig.

4. Samen verder

→ Ik zou graag meer professionaliteit willen, een meer doorgaande leerlijn (zowel taal als digitale scholing). Dit vraagt ook om een bredere integrale aanpak. Scholing in groepen (zoals samen verder) zou ook fijn zijn.

Misschien ook dat de onwetendheid van anderen weg moet, zodat de kwestie meer podium krijgt?

1. Ja, dat gebeurt gelukkig steeds meer. Het is erg mooi dat er op deze schaal aan gewerkt wordt.
2. Er is ook onwetendheid bij de organisaties inderdaad. Die kijken uiteindelijk toch alleen maar naar de cijfertjes. Ze weten ook wel wat de specifieke vaardigheden van de mensen zijn die dat werk doen, maar daarbuiten weten ze nog niks. Het is ook een uitdaging voor ons om de communicatie met zulke bedrijven te verbeteren.

→ Onwetendheid wordt al iets minder, maar ook bij organisaties moet deze onwetendheid verminderd worden.

Theme 4: Positive and negative aspects of literacy training and the available materials and instruments

Wat zijn volgens u positieve dingen die gedaan worden om laaggeletterden te helpen?

1. Wat ik goed vindt is dat verschillende instanties bereid zijn om samen te werken en dat het dus daadwerkelijk van de grond komt. Wat moeilijk blijft is dat de

laaggeletterde Nederlander moeilijk te bereiken is en dat ze moeilijk over de drempel komen. Hier zou meer op ingestoken worden.

Hoe?

Door investering van samenwerking van verschillende partners. Dat het vraagstuk bij mensen meer tussen de oren komt en dat er meer op gelet moet worden. Hierbij komen vervolgens weer vragen bij zoals "welke houding moet ik aannemen zonder de grens te overschrijden?".

2. Ik vind het geweldig als ik alle materialen die ik ter beschikking heb kan gebruiken om mensen op een spoor te zetten waar zij iets mee kunnen. Samen trainingen verzorgen vind ik ook een pluspunt. De communicatie met partners (humanitas bijvoorbeeld) is ook goed. Het blijft wel noodzakelijk om met elkaar in gesprek te blijven en ervoor te zorgen dat iedereen op de hoogte is van taalhuizen en wat wij kunnen bieden.
3. De cursussen die wij geven zijn in mijn ogen heel nuttig. Ook is er een redelijk goede samenwerking en communicatie tussen het gehele taalverbond, waar ik deelnemers doorverwijs naar het Taalhuis en andersom.
4. Ik vind het heel goed dat deze optie er is van Taalhuizen voor hen die het ook echt willen. Maar zoiets was er al voor de Taalhuizen; het is eigenlijk niks nieuws. Vanuit ROC zijn er professionele docenten die hier gespecialiseerd voor zijn. Iedereen bedoelt het natuurlijk heel goed, maar het beleid dat je 1 jaar op taalhuis zit is natuurlijk ook niet genoeg. Er gaat veel meer tijd in zitten.

→ Het is uiteraard goed dat de optie van Taalhuizen er zijn voor hen die dat willen. De scholing en cursussen die gegeven worden voelen ook als nuttig, maar er zou meer

geïnvesteed kunnen worden in de samenwerking met partners en de communicatie moet wel aanblijven. De drempel voor de deelnemers moet ook wel wat omlaag.

Dus het grootste probleem zit bij de stap naar de scholing?

1. Je wil de laaggeletterden niet duwen en trekken, maar je wil dat ze zelf de weg vinden.

We zeggen dat waar we mee bezig zijn een proactieve aanpak is, want we willen mensen zelfredzaam maken, maar eigenlijk is het een reactieve aanpak, want ergens hebben mensen de boot gemist

2. We zijn wel regelmatig bezig met partners, maar alles, zoals het belang en de doorverwijzing, moet wel steeds herhaald worden.

→Je wil de deelnemers niet duwen en trekken; ze moeten ook zelf inzien wat het nut heeft.

Taak aan ons en onze partners, maar dit moet wel steeds herhaald worden.

Wat mist u nog?

1. Binnen de mogelijkheden die er zijn, is alles redelijk compleet. Je hebt toegang tot veel materialen. Als ik ergens tegenaan loop, zit dat voornamelijk in de cultuurverschillen en motivatie, hoe blijf je mensen motiveren.
2. Soms mis ik de tijd, maar je probeert toch met de beschikbare tijd zoveel mogelijk dingen te doen. Het is ook nog steeds erg lastig om NT1ers te bereiken. Ik zou graag willen dat iedereen de schouders eronder zet en een actieplan ontwikkelt om zoveel mogelijk mensen binnen te halen.
3. Ik merk wel dat als we met overheidsmensen aan tafel willen zitten om het in een grotere schaal te bespreken, de boel toch wel erg vertraagd wordt. Ik wil graag dat als ik vandaag iets afspreek dat ik er morgen mee kan beginnen.

→ Uiteraard is er altijd tijd tekort. Ook blijft het een uitdaging om deelnemers te blijven motiveren en er zou een beter actieplan moeten komen om NT1ers te bereiken.

Heeft u nog andere opmerkingen als het gaat om beschikbare ondersteuning aan laaggeletterden?

1. Nee.
2. Ik heb goede communicatie met mijn taalvrijwilligers en ik ben redelijk zichtbaar. Er is een mogelijkheid om steeds in contact te blijven en dat vind ik ook heel erg belangrijk. Wel vind ik dat het belang van de deelnemer voorop moet blijven staan. Er moet een goede en veilige omgeving zijn, vooral omdat NT1ers kwetsbaar kunnen zijn. Een bibliotheek kan al een drempel zijn, want dit is een erg talige plek. Verder ben je in een dorp erg zichtbaar, wat in het begin lastig kan zijn en een grote stap op zichzelf.
3. Het kenbaar maken van dat laaggeletterdheid in organisaties voorkomt is sowieso een erg grote uitdaging. Daarom moeten we ook echt naar die bedrijven toe en het probleem kenbaar maken. Dit zou eigenlijk ook meer vanuit de bedrijven moeten komen. Als zij weten dat ze binnen een aantal jaar bijvoorbeeld gaan automatiseren, zouden ze al moeten signaleren en uitzoeken hoe het zit met de kennis van de doelgroep die bij hun werkt. Dit vraagt echter ook weer veel van de organisaties en dit is een wisselwerking met elkaar. Dat kan alleen als ik als taalhuiscoördinator ervoor kan zorgen dat we daar binnen komen.
4. Op de manier waarop het nu gedaan wordt, kijken we niet volwaardig naar de mensen. Het is allemaal hulpverlening. Geef ze meer in hun loonzak en kijk of het probleem alsnog zo groot is. Waarom moet studeren ook? Het is soms ook trekken aan een dood

paard en waarom willen we mensen zo veranderen? Ook dat we er gezondheidsproblemen bij halen; het is geen gelijkwaardige situatie.

Wat ik vooral erg vind zijn de onderzoeken door Maurice de Greeff. Die neemt enquêtes af die ze niet kunnen lezen, wat al denigrerend is. Vervolgens staan er erg denigrerende vragen in over je financiële status, of iemand eenzaam is enzovoorts. Het zijn vragen waar jij je dan inderdaad voor kan schamen en er wordt dus al een soort profiel van jou neergezet op voorhand.

De publiciteit staat mij dus tegen. De publiciteit is vanuit ons 'hoger opgeleiden' en niet vanuit de mensen zelf. We leggen het probleem bij hen, terwijl het probleem eigenlijk bij ons zit, namelijk zoals wij naar de mensen kijken en alsof wij beter weten wat goed voor hen is.

→De deelnemer moet altijd voorop staan, dus er moet een veilige en goede omgeving zijn voor de deelnemer. Een bibliotheek kan hierin al een grote drempel zijn. Ook ben je in een dorp erg zichtbaar, omdat het niet zo'n grote plek is.

Ook moet laaggeletterdheid echt meer kenbaar aan organisaties gemaakt worden, maar dit is ook een taak voor hen.

Disclaimer: op de manier waarop het nu gedaan wordt, kijken we niet volwaardig naar de mensen. Het moet van de soms denigrerende en hulpverlening rol af (neem bijvoorbeeld onderzoeken door Maurice). Ook de publiciteit staat tegen, omdat we het probleem bij hen leggen, terwijl het bij ons zit.

Theme 5: other interesting sayings/anecdotes

1. De meeste deelnemers willen 1-op-1 begeleid worden. Dit heeft te maken met herinneringen aan eigen schooltijd en schaamte. Soms is het echter ook zo dat het

beter kan zijn om in een conversatie groep te beginnen, waarbij het goed is om vrij te leren communiceren in een groep. Het kan ook zijn dat iemand meer de sociale setting zoekt, waar een taalcafé dan leuk kan zijn. Het is altijd aan de mensen zelf wat ze willen of niet, maar 1 op 1 scholing is toch wel de populairste keuze.

2. Deze deelnemers hebben vaak juist andere kwaliteiten, als je bijvoorbeeld ziet welke strategieën zij kunnen toepassen en hebben ontwikkeld om toch bepaalde dingen te kunnen onthouden (beeld, plaatjes, tekeningen) vind ik dat heel mooi om te zien hoe iemand zich toch staande weet te houden door een heel andere strategie. Vaak zijn mensen ook vaak laagopgeleid, het is altijd heel fijn als iemand meer handvatten aangereikt krijgt om zich te kunnen voelen en beter mee te kunnen doen in de maatschappij.
3. Vooral voor mensen die zich al hun hele leven gered hebben, ook in het bedrijfsleven zonder zoveel met de taal te moeten doen, is heel knap. Dat je dingen waar je niet zo goed in bent zo kan verbloemen, is het juist knap dat deze mensen toch ervoor uitkomen en hun verhaal gaan doen. Zo kan je ook andere mensen over de streep halen, kijk maar naar de taalambassadeurs.
4. De groep autochtonen is de lastigste groep, want die willen het vaak niet toegeven, er zit vaak schaamte bij. En deze mensen redden zich in winkels en dergelijke dingen best goed, die gebruiken strategieën zoals "hebben jullie de pindakaas verplaatst want ik kan het niet meer terugvinden."

Dat is een hele lastige groep die dan wel strategieën hebben gevonden voor momenten in het dagelijks leven, maar dat wordt dus lastig bij de formelere taken zoals de belasting regelen die gedigitaliseerd wordt. Ja klopt. Daarom vind ik het ook nodig dat dit meer in het nieuws gebracht moet worden, zodat mensen het zien en zelf ook getriggerd worden en minder schaamte voelen

Group 2: Language volunteers

Theme 1: Characteristics of illiterates

Wat is de gemiddelde leeftijd en range van uw deelnemers?

1. 60+
2. 60 & 62
3. 19, 22, 62, eerdere analfabeet als deelnemer.
4. 69

→60+, uitzonderingen zijn de twee jongeren met een laag iq.

Wat is het hoogste opleidingsniveau dat de deelnemers doorgaans hebben afgerond?

1. Ik zou uitgaan van vmbo kader en misschien aan de lagere kant daarvan. Ik ben daar niet 100% zeker van, ook omdat hij een deel van zijn jeugd in Australië heeft geleefd.
2. Lagere school en daarna LTS, maar niveau Nederlands was lager dan LTS; en praktijkonderwijs.
3. De jongere deelnemers wonen begeleid, dus die hebben misschien een beetje lagere school gehad, maar dat was het. Mevrouw is ook zeer laag opgeleid
4. Geen opleiding en lagere school niet afgemaakt.

→ Lagere school is vaak max. Daarna nauwelijks een vervolgopleiding gedaan, maar direct gaan werken.

Is Engels ook een gebruikte taal voor hem?

1. Ja, hij heeft de basisschool en een deel van het voortgezet onderwijs in het Engels gehad, dus hij heeft kennis van beide talen. Ik denk ook dat zijn taalachterstand hier

mede door veroorzaakt is. Lagere school in Nederland waar hij al moeite had met lezen en schrijven, vervolgens naar Australië en alles moest dus weer omgeschakeld worden toen hij terugkeerde naar Nederland. Het Nederlands is waarschijnlijk weggezakt, ook omdat ze waarschijnlijk voornamelijk Gronings spraken thuis.

→ Engels als tweede eerste taal kan bij hebben gedragen aan de Nederlandse taalachterstand.

Wat is het gemiddelde schrijf- en leesniveau van uw deelnemers? Zijn er ook mensen die niet kunnen lezen en/of schrijven?

1. Lezen gaat op zich wel, maar schrijven eigenlijk totaal niet.
2. Ze hebben beide moeite met lezen en schrijven
3. Oudere kan wel 'lezen', maar vooral begrijpend lezen is een stapje anders. Schrijven is nog slechter. De jongeren kunnen ook niet goed lezen en schrijven, plus, ze hebben een erg laag iq wat het ook drukt.
4. Schrijfniveau is nagenoeg niks, leesniveau is heel laag. Aanvankelijk kon hij alleen losse letters of woorden van maximaal 2/3 letters lezen.

→ Meestal is het lezen o k e, maar schrijven zeker nog een stapje terug. Voornamelijk begrijpend lezen is lastig.

Hebben uw deelnemers ook problemen in hun luister- en spreekvaardigheden?

1. Praten gaat goed, maar daar komt soms wel Gronings tussendoor. Dit sprak ik in het begin ook veel met hem om hem op z'n gemak te stellen.
2. Ze hebben geen moeite met spreken en luisteren.
3. Niet dat ik weet. Door het iq van de jongeren wordt het wel een beetje gedrukt.
4. Hij heeft verder geen problemen met spreken en luisteren.

→ Eigenlijk geen problemen mee. Alleen iq kan hier invloed op hebben.

Heeft u het gevoel dat uw deelnemers bepaalde dingen (zowel in het dagelijks leven als tijdens de training) niet doen of vermijden omdat zij laaggeletterd zijn?

1. Hij vindt het bijvoorbeeld moeilijk in het gemeentetehuis. Hij vraagt dan vaak om uitleg en om telefonische afspraken in plaats van schriftelijke afspraken.
Hij heeft dus een kleine kennis van het lezen, dus soms denkt hij dat hij iets begrijpt, maar dan gokt hij toch nog wel veel.
2. Bij een tweestrijd, bijvoorbeeld bij een staking, kiest hij altijd voor de veilige weg. De andere heeft iets meer ondersteuning op zijn werkplek dus daar is dat wat minder.
3. De jongeren zijn natuurlijk iets anders, omdat zij op een woonboerderij wonen. Een van hen werkt als kok en dat vindt hij heel leuk, maar een opleiding gaat bijvoorbeeld nooit lukken, want dat is te hoog gegrepen.
4. Ja, hij opende bijvoorbeeld geen post.

→ Veel praktische dingen, zoals post openen, afspraken maken bij de gemeente, veilige weg kiezen tijdens staken, enzovoorts.

Weten collega's van uw deelnemers dat uw deelnemers laaggeletterd zijn?

1. Ja dat weten ze, maar ze doen er niet altijd wat mee. Soms vergeten ze het en dan worden de deelnemers eigenlijk buiten spel gezet.

→ Ja, maar ze hebben wel de touwtjes in handen.

Hebben uw deelnemers het Taalhuis zelf benaderd of zijn zij hier terecht gekomen via een tussenpersoon?

1. Volgens mij is hij uit zichzelf gekomen. Het scheelt bij hem wel dat hij de drempel en schaamte voor zijn laaggeletterdheid minder voelt. Hij probeert zelf ook wel eens mensen aan te sporen om naar het Taalhuis toe te gaan.
2. De ene heeft op school gezeten en is vanuit daar doorverwezen naar het Taalhuis. De andere is gekomen via zijn sociale werkplek.
3. De oudere is uit zichzelf gekomen. Ze had er op televisie iets over gezien en is toen naar de bibliotheek gekomen. De jongeren zijn vanuit hun zorgboerderij hier terecht gekomen.
4. Hij is hier terecht gekomen via een tussenpersoon, een (oud)lerares van de vormingsschool(?). Hij had zelf nog nooit gehoord van een Taalhuis.

→ Varieert. Sommigen uit zichzelf, anderen via een tussenpersoon.

Zouden zij ook uit zichzelf zijn gekomen als ze hiervan af wisten?

1. De eerste wel. Die is zo vaak gepest vroeger dat hij er echt zelf iets wat aan wil doen.

→ Ja

De manier waarop de deelnemers binnenkomen kan een grote factor zijn?

1. Ja, als het iemand haast wordt opgelegd is dat niet de goede manier, want dan mis je ook een bepaalde interesse.
2. De manier waarop de deelnemers dus binnen gekomen zijn is geen factor voor motivatie.

→ Geen duidelijk antwoord.

Hebben zij schroom voor hun laaggeletterdheid?

1. De ene wel, da andere minder. Dit komt doordat de ene gekleineerd is op school vroeger en door zijn vader en hem telkens is gezegd dat hij het niet kan. Als je dat je hele leven hoort ga je het vanzelf geloven. Die andere staat iets anders in het leven en is vroeger waarschijnlijk ook minder gepest. Dit is nu wel minder.
2. Nee, nooit gehad. Ze vindt het prima om hier te zitten en te praten met mensen in de bibliotheek.
3. Zij niet, nooit gehad. Vind het ook leuk om te babbelen met de mensen in de bibliotheek. De jongeren ook niet. Die willen gewoon leren. De analfabeet had dat vroeger wel; die zat ook vol smoesjes die hij gebruikte, maar hoe meer hij aan de slag ging hoe minder dat werd.
4. Hij schaamde zich enorm voor zijn laaggeletterdheid, nu gelukkig niet meer.

→ Verschilt verrassend genoeg erg per persoon, ligt rond de 50/50. De meesten die zich wel schaamden, doen dat loop van de tijd niet meer.

Had u het gevoel dat ze een drempel over moesten in het begin om te durven lezen en schrijven?

3. Nee, alle vier (de analfabeet meegerekend) niet.

Theme 2: Teachers' experiences during literacy training (and outside this setting):

In welke momenten hebben de deelnemers het meeste moeite in het dagelijks leven?

1. Zie antwoorden thema 1 over vermijden.
2. 1 heeft toch wel veel moeite op werk gehad. (zie anekdote thema 5)
3. Het begrijpen van verhalen. Als de oudere bijvoorbeeld verhalen vertelt is het heel simpel, dus dan moet je zelf ook oppassen dat je niet te moeilijk gaat praten.
4. Het hele dagelijkse leven is voor hem een struggle, maar het invullen van formulieren is vooral een crime en hij laat zich door een laag zelfbeeld, door bijvoorbeeld de huisarts, zeer kwalijk, met een kluitje in het riet sturen.

→Varieert erg per persoon en situatie, maar wel veel basisdingen waar taal bij te pas komt.

Wat is het hoofddoel van de deelnemers die bij u terecht zijn gekomen om geholpen te worden?

1. Zijn hoofddoel is dat hij goed wil lezen, brieven kan lezen en dat hij digitaal goed kan beheersen. Dit is voor hem denk ik wel heel hoog ingezet, maar dat zeg ik natuurlijk niet, want dat is demotiverend.
2. Ik weet niet precies wat hun echte hoofddoel is. Wat ik wel weet is dat ze beiden hopen dat ze televisie kunnen kijken met ondertiteling eronder (buitenlandse series enzovoorts)
3. Dat weet ik niet, want ik weet niet precies waar het einde zit. Ze willen eigenlijk gewoon lezen en schrijven en kijken waar het eindigt.

Het gaat er bij hen (de jongeren) ook voornamelijk om dát ze kunnen lezen, niet wát ze lezen.
4. Toen ik hem dat vroeg tijdens de kennismaking, was het dat hij de bijbel wilde kunnen lezen.

→Verschilt ook erg per persoon. De ene meer een formele, de andere een informelere reden.

Zit er dan een specifieke praktische reden achter?

1. Hij zou bijvoorbeeld wel heel graag een baan willen vinden, maar door gezondheidskwesties en zijn leeftijd is dat waarschijnlijk niet haalbaar.

→ Praktische reden (zoals een baan) is vaak een toevoegende bonus, maar niet perse de directe aanleiding.

In hoeverre zijn uw deelnemers gemotiveerd om het Nederlands te leren en welke redenen hebben zij om niet gemotiveerd te zijn en is dit terug te zien in het leerproces?

1. Hij is erg intrinsiek gemotiveerd om beter te kunnen functioneren en praktischer te zijn en dat hij meer kan begrijpen en niet met hangende pootjes rondloopt. Die motivatie thuis vasthouden blijft nog wel heel moeilijk. Ook tijdens de training kwakkelde de motivatie wel weg na een uur. Dan is hij verzadigd en dan gaan we gewoon over op een algemeen babbeltje.
2. Verschilt. De ene dacht dat die wel even snel de taal zou leren in een paar maanden. Ik zei dat wat jouw kinderen in 1 week kunnen leren, doe jij in een maand of meer. Daar komt hij nu achter, dus dat is nu een drempel waar hij overheen moet. Hij is ook waarschijnlijk aangespoord door zijn geletterde vrouw om iets te doen dus misschien is hij wel liever lui dan moet. Zijn motivatie is dus nog een beetje wankel, omdat het niet zijn idee was om hiernaartoe te gaan. Die andere is juist heel enthousiast. Voor de ene is het dus soms teveel en de andere wil soms teveel.
3. Ze zijn alle drie goed gemotiveerd. Wel meer gemotiveerd in lezen dan schrijven. We hebben ook afgesproken dat we nooit 2 dingen tegelijk doen. Of lezen, of schrijven.

4. Hij is enorm gemotiveerd.

→ Over het algemeen is iedereen intrinsiek gemotiveerd. 1 persoon wankelt nog een beetje, wat verklaard kan worden door het feit dat hij niet zelf naar het Taalhuis is gekomen.

Hoe gaat de vooruitgang van uw deelnemer?

1. Hij vindt zelf dat hij een betere beheersing krijgt, al zie ik dat zelf iets minder positief.
Wel vind ik het mooi dat hij een grotere eigen waarde heeft, vrijer en vlotter is en meer onderneemt en probeert. Zijn zelfbeeld is duidelijk sterker geworden.
2. De enthousiasteling begon ook wel twijfelachtig, maar dat verdween door het onderlinge gevoel goed zat. De andere heeft nog steeds voornamelijk het gevoel dat hij móet, dus die motivatie begint nu pas een beetje te komen.
3. Het gaat erg goed. We hebben er een jaar over gedaan, maar de kinderbijbel is uit!

→ Vooruitgang is zeker zichtbaar, al wel op een laag tempo.

Wat zijn de grootste verschillen die u ziet als u de training van NT1ers vergelijkt met training van NT2ers of van 'normale studenten'?

1. Een NT2er is vaak iemand die technisch goed Nederlands kan lezen, maar begrijpen moeilijk vindt. Bij een NT1er is het juist andersom. Als hij het gelezen heeft begrijpt hij het allemaal, maar hij heeft juist de technische problemen.
2. NT1ers weten waar je het over hebt. NT2ers hebben dat veel minder, praten vaak bijvoorbeeld Arabisch onderling en zijn in mijn ervaring ook minder gemotiveerd. Ook zie je dat een NT1er datgene wat hij leert direct kan toepassen. Een NT2er heeft dat vaak niet.

3. Ik vind werken met NT2ers niet fijn, voornamelijk door de communicatie. Met NT1ers kan je goed praten en een vertrouwensband creëren, maar dat lukt mij niet met NT2ers. Ook de interesse van de NT2ers lag later dan de NT1ers.
4. nvt

→NT1ers weten vaak waar je het over hebt, die communicatie is lastiger met NT2ers. Ook hebben NT2ers het meeste moeite met begrip, terwijl NT1ers meer moeite hebben met de technische aspecten.

Welke uitdagingen komt u tegen wanneer u aan het werk bent met uw deelnemers?

1. Het is mijn doel om hem te blijven prikkelen om hem zo het leven net iets makkelijker te maken, waardoor hij dingen ook zelf gaat proberen. Ik probeer ook wel eens mijn en zijn grenzen te verleggen, kijken of hij iets langer door kan gaan dan normaal. Soms lukt dat wel, de andere keer niet.
2. -
3. Een uitdaging is toch wel het feit dat veel van de materialen niet geschikt zijn voor de jongeren van mij; vaak nog iets te moeilijk. Dan moet ik achter in de bibliotheek op zoek gaan naar geschikte leesboekjes etc.
4. Geen.

→ Het blijft een uitdaging om de grenzen te blijven verleggen. Aan de andere kant is het ook een uitdaging dat de materialen niet voor iedereen geschikt zijn. Dan moet ik via andere manieren materialen vinden.

Theme 3: Availability and usage of existing materials and instruments

Welke instrumenten en materialen heeft u ter beschikking tijdens de training en welke hiervan gebruikt u?

1. Er zijn Taalhuis methoden die gebruikt worden, zoals succesboekjes. In mijn ervaring zijn er echter weinig mensen die hiermee werken, ondanks dat het leuke boekjes zijn. In die boekjes moet je namelijk een stramien volgen, maar sommige mensen zijn niet bezig met sommige aspecten in dat boekje. Dus de structuur past eigenlijk niet. en ondanks dat je verschillende niveaus hebt, sluit het nooit écht aan met wat iemand wil.
2. Er zijn veel materialen vanuit Taalhuis die ik kan gebruiken. Er zijn ook succesboekjes, maar die vind ik niet leuk voor NT1ers. Ook maak ik gebruik van oefenen.nl (vrijblijvend)

Klik en tik ben ik niet zo'n fan van, omdat ze het hier moeten doen, maar thuis moeten blijven oefenen en dat doen ze niet. Die stof is iets te afhankelijk van hun eigen tijd.

Verder gebruik ik leesboekjes van verschillende niveaus. Als de niveaus omhoog gaan worden de boekjes iets voller, kleiner lettertype etcetera.. Ook lees & schrijf opdrachtboeken
3. Succesboekjes, oefenen.nl, leesboekjes en rekenboekjes. Er is heel veel beschikbaar, maar mijn specifieke doelgroep heeft er weinig aan.
4. Ik heb alle wenselijke materialen van het Taalhuis tot mijn beschikking, maar ik maak er geen gebruik van.

→Alle wenselijke materialen van Taalhuizen zijn in principe beschikbaar (zie ook bij groep 1), maar ook wel wat kritiek op de materialen.

Wat voor een kritiek op materialen heeft u?

1. Kritiek op succesboekjes (zie eerste vraag)

2. Kriek op succesboekjes: staan veel letters in dus dat is niet zo fijn en naar mijn ervaring weten de meeste mensen wel hoe ze een afspraak moeten maken bij de gemeente dus daar hebben ze niet zoveel behoefte aan. Deze zijn in mijn ogen voornamelijk gericht voor NT2ers.
3. De lesmaterialen die we hier hebben zijn eigenlijk niet goed afgestemd op mijn deelnemers. De instroom is het laagste niveau, maar dat is eigenlijk al te moeilijk voor hen. Ik gebruik wel simpele boekjes: 'op weg naar 1f', en die zijn iets lager dan instroom nog, maar soms is zelfs dat te moeilijk nog.

Het is soms dus moeilijk om materialen voor hen te vinden; het Taalhuis is iets meer gericht op mensen met een iets hoger niveau.

→ lesmaterialen zijn niet allemaal goed afgestemd op de deelnemers. Ook de succesboekjes die de coördinatoren zo goed vinden, zijn veel minder goed volgens de taalvrijwilligers.

Hoe gaat u persoonlijk te werk?

1. Ik kies zelf de materialen, zoals boekjes uit de bibliotheek of krantenstukjes die passen bij de deelnemer zijn interesse. Ik heb wel eens geprobeerd om hem boekjes mee te laten nemen naar huis en iets voor te bereiden, maar dat krijg ik niet voor elkaar.
2. Eerst vraag ik hoe iemands week was, huiswerk nakijken, eventuele vragen bespreken, stukje lezen, huiswerk voor volgende keer opgeven.
3. Ik zoek op internet waar ik mee kan werken en ik werk met simpele boekjes.

Ik houd bij wat we de vorige week gedaan hebben. Vaak herhaal ik een klein stukje met lezen en dan proberen we verder te komen.
4. Ik heb bij aanvang bedacht dat het voor meneer vooral leuk moet zijn. Hij wilde de bijbel leren lezen dus kocht ik een kinderbijbel. Aan het einde van de les krijgt hij van

mij een kopie van hetgeen we die les hebben gelezen. Gedurende de week leest hij het en onderstreept hij de voor hem moeilijke woorden. Die oefenen we de week er na en die schrijft hij in een schrift. Ik gebruik dus geen leermethoden.

→Redelijk vaste structuur. Startpraatje, korte terugkoppeling op vorige keer, aan de slag met deze stof en verder komen. Het moet wel leuk blijven!

Wat bent u van plan te doen als u klaar bent met deze 'simpele' boekjes?

3. Ik hoop dan toch met de succesboekjes aan de slag te kunnen. Anders ga ik weer iets anders zoeken.

Wat is volgens u de ideale manier om laaggeletterden te trainen, is dit al bewerkstelligd en zo niet, wat mist u nog?

1. Een heel praktische manier is een stille of kleine ruimte waarin we kunnen werken.

Sommige Taalhuizen hebben dit ter beschikking, maar niet allemaal. Het kan dan een gigantische klankkast worden en kan averechts werken als mensen schroom hebben van hun laaggeletterdheid. Ook is de afleiding dan minder groot en is er meer privacy.

2. Zie volgende vraag.

3. Het is idealer als ik een eigen kamertje heb hier. Het is geen ideale locatie, ook niet om nieuwe mensen te krijgen, want laaggeletterden komen natuurlijk nooit in de bibliotheek. Ook zal het fijn zijn om een aparte ruimte te hebben, omdat de deelnemers toch wel snel afgeleid zijn.

4. Houd het leuk en verzand niet al te veel in methoden.

→ Een eigen ruimte waar we kunnen werken, misschien ook niet in de bibliotheek. Ook meer privacy en minder geluid om ons heen zou helpen, bijvoorbeeld tegen afleiding. Houd het wel leuk en verzand niet al te veel in methoden.

Wat mist u nog qua materialen etcetera?

1. Ik heb niet het gevoel dat we echt nog iets missen. We krijgen vaak mailtjes van de taalcoördinator met nieuwe linkjes en ideeën en iedereen heeft zijn eigen manier. Veel taalvrijwilligers (niet ik) hebben ook een onderwijs achtergrond.
2. Het zou leuk zijn als er boekjes zouden komen met allemaal losse verhalen. Dan hoeven ze het boek niet in een keer uit te lezen, maar kunnen ze het per verhaal doen. Ook vind ik dat er nog te weinig tussenboekjes zijn. Je hebt namelijk deze boekjes en dan een heel groot gat naar de rest van de boekjes. Ook zijn het zulke simpele boekjes dat er nauwelijks detail in zit en dat missen de deelnemers wel. De boekjes missen dus diepgang.
3. Niks, want ik gebruik ze dus niet.

→ Over het algemeen niet zoveel, maar een boekje met bijvoorbeeld losse kortere verhalen zou leuk zijn. Ook zijn er nog te weinig tussenboekjes; de kloof van het ene niveau naar het andere is nu te hoog.

Theme 4: Positive and negative aspects of literacy training and the available materials and instruments

Wat zijn volgens u positieve dingen die gedaan worden om laaggeletterden te helpen en wat mist u nog?

1. Ik vind het heel goed om te zien dat het Taalhuis meer naar buiten gaat;samenwerking met werkplein enzovoorts. Ik weet echter nog niet of dit al helemaal lukt. Krijgen mensen het wel mee? Je ziet namelijk een heleboel informatie, maar ik heb niet het gevoel dat veel mensen daarop af komen. De stap is toch nog wel heel groot. Je moet dan haast al een partner hebben die je aanspoort en we moeten meer privacy kunnen krijgen.
2. Ik zou laaggeletterdheid natuurlijk uit de taboe sfeer willen halen, maar dat lukt nog niet zo snel; het is te lang weggestopt. Ik vind dat een bibliotheek nog wel een grote drempel is. Eigenlijk zouden de cursussen in bijvoorbeeld dorpshuizen plaats moeten vinden. Het mag allemaal wat informeler.

Ik vind het wel positief dat ze proberen om mensen te bereiken. Als het allemaal wat laagdrempeliger is, wordt het makkelijker voor hen.
3. Het materiaal mag wat mij betreft dus beter. Ook vind ik het een minpunt dat we geen reiskostenvergoeding krijgen. De reiskosten, naar bijvoorbeeld cursussen, zijn allemaal voor eigen rekening en dat vind ik slordig. Ik heb op dit moment dus ook niet echt de neiging om naar plekken te gaan waarvoor ik verder moet reizen. Dan denk ik, laat maar.
4. Ik vind het taalhuis in zijn algemeen fantastisch! Ik mis verder niets qua materialen maar er zou meer bekendheid aan het Taalhuis gegeven moeten worden. Ik vind het, terwijl de doelgroep laaggeletterd is, bizar dat er, tenminste in deze omgeving, alleen een foldertje beschikbaar is (dat is wat lastig als je nagenoeg dan wel niet kan lezen). De autochtone doelgroep heeft de hele dag de radio/tv, veelal regionale zenders, aanstaan. Het lijkt mij daardoor een goed idee om samenwerking te zoeken met regionale zenders.

→ De samenwerking met andere organisaties en dat ze proberen mensen te bereiken is heel goed, maar komt dat wel echt van de grond? Er zou wel nog meer bekendheid aan het Taalhuis gegeven moeten worden. Reiskosten zouden fijn zijn.

Heeft u nog andere opmerkingen als het gaat om beschikbare ondersteuning aan laaggeletterden?

1. Taalvrijwilliger zijn is eigenlijk een eenzame taak. We proberen wel een paar keer per jaar samen te komen maar dat is het ook. Ook gaan meeste gesprekken dan over NT2ers, omdat dat de grootste doelgroep is bij ons.
2. Nee
3. De reiskostenvergoeding dus.
4. Zie hierboven.

→ Taalvrijwilliger zijn is toch wel een eenzame taak. Ook de reiskostenvergoeding is er niet en samenwerking met bijvoorbeeld regionale zenders zou handig zijn.

De NT1 stroom loopt dus nog niet zo goed?

1. Nee het loopt nog niet zo lekker, terwijl dit wel een gebied is waar dit nog veel voorkomt (Oost-Groningen heeft een geschiedenis met grote arm - rijk ongelijkheid)

Colofon

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English summary

Illiteracy has recently resurfaced as being a big societal issue in the Netherlands that might be passed on from generations or that arises due to failures to gain a sufficient educational level. It consequently could lead to a lower income, higher health risks and shame. It therefore might be of vital importance to try to decrease the illiteracy rate in the Netherlands, to prevent people with low literacy skills to be excluded in our modern society. This study provides an inventory of recent, relevant studies, programs and materials that aim to decrease the Dutch illiteracy rate. This inventory illustrates that, although many factors are being accounted for (e.g. ways to improve illiteracy identification or communication), many other questions are still unanswered. Therefore, the second sub-study focuses on literacy training in Taalhuizen to get an insight look and to look for improvements based on instructors' experiences. This study's results indicate that these trainings provide for positive improvements in decreasing illiteracy. However, it still remains difficult to reach and identify the target group in which shame continues to be a major factor. In addition, the literacy training environment is not ideal. Separate rooms are not always available, which leads to a lack of privacy and a higher risk of distraction. Lastly, majority of the materials remain unused, due to the fact that they either do not align with participants' learning goal or with their literacy level. This study shows that we should continue to focus on improving such factors to maximize the impact of literacy training. It also suggests to break the taboo of illiteracy by focusing not only on things that the illiterate population cannot do and needs to improve, but also on things the literate population can improve to meet them in the middle.

Keywords: illiteracy, reaching illiterates, literacy training, Taalhuizen.